

## 2. Producing German Cinema for the World: Global Blockbusters from Location Germany

### Abstract

Extending attention to the relevance of Deleuze's film theory for the German cinema of neoliberalism, this chapter builds on influential approaches to recent German film in analyzing *Das Boot* (1981); *Run Lola Run* (1998); and *The Lives of Others* (2006). The chapter focuses on strategies employed by German blockbusters to address international audiences while affirming the victory of global capitalist imperatives over local film traditions; it demonstrates how the predominance of commercial imperatives underpins the emergence of particular formal, aesthetic, and generic traits, which aim to subsume and diffuse the heterogeneity and variety of Germany's legacy of counter-hegemonic filmmaking. A feminist analysis of the films emphasizes how their affirmative vision is based on an ambiguous and often misogynist gender politics.

**Keywords:** Wolfgang Petersen, Tom Tykwer, Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, Gilles Deleuze, affirmative politics, gender

In 1979, shortly after taking over as the CEO of Neue Constantin, the only remaining film production and distribution company still entirely under German ownership, Bernd Eichinger offered DM 2 million of completion funding to the Bavaria Studios production *Das Boot* in exchange for its German distribution rights. Eichinger's canny investment in *Das Boot*—at that time the most expensive German film ever made—underscored his vision for the transformation of German cinema away from the nationally specific *Autorenfilm* and toward a more flexible, national-global hybrid film, a fundamentally new form of popular, market-oriented filmmaking whose emergence Eichinger played a crucial role in facilitating through

his long career as Germany's most significant producer and film mogul of the contemporary era.<sup>1</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 1, the 'film crisis' of the early 1980s initiated a period of changes to the German film landscape. These included the revision of film subvention laws to reward commercial films; the founding of regional film boards with the express purpose of improving the quality of German films and strengthening the economy of Germany as a film location; and the renewal of genre cinema. This period also saw a massive increase both in the number of (West) German films produced (from 49 in 1980 to 68 in 1989) and in the domestic market share of German films (from 9.3 percent in 1980 to 23.4 percent in 1988).<sup>2</sup> Though these numbers would eventually shrink again—demonstrating the long-term consequences of the liberalization of German film policy, which ultimately led to German cinema's very low average domestic market share—they underscore the fact that the commercial renewal of German cinema usually attributed to the 1990s was already firmly grounded in the West German film culture of the 1980s. Indeed, already by the mid-1980s, (West) German cinema rebounded from the ostensible film crisis, not least due to the market-oriented strategies initiated by Eichinger.

Offering a new model of German cinema with international appeal, Eichinger's producer-driven genre films supplanted German art cinema by performing as art films in the context of their international distribution, while simultaneously creating new expectations at home for a highly commercialized cinema that could compete with the best the global film industries have to offer. Characterized by its origins in and responses to the New Economy and the social, political, and ideological changes occasioned by neoliberalism, this new commercial cinema transforms national culture into market culture. In representing German history and society, such films exemplify 'a rhetorical commitment to diversity, and to a narrow, formal, nonredistributive form of "equality" politics for the new millennium'.<sup>3</sup> Rather than countering the difference and oppositional qualities historically represented by art cinema (particularly the New German Cinema), the cinema of neoliberalism patented by Eichinger co-opts its aesthetic styles and progressive politics, including feminism, antiracism, LGBTQ justice, and class-based struggle, for an ultimately affirmative world view. These

1 On Eichinger's role in facilitating the emergence of market-oriented filmmaking in Germany, see also Baer, 'Producing Adaptations.'

2 Uka, 'Der deutsche Film "schiebt den Blues"', 110–111.

3 Duggan, *The Twilight of Equality?*, 44.

ideologically promiscuous films allow viewers to indulge in the thrills offered by countercinema, alternative lifestyles, or leftist politics, while ultimately foreclosing on the critiques they offer and channelling them for the agendas of advanced capitalism.

Walter Uka has described the early 1980s as a 'moment when two different film cultures collided: the American producer's cinema and the European auteur cinema'.<sup>4</sup> Over the course of his career, Eichinger in many ways succeeded in reconciling these two models by serving as an auteur producer who both facilitated and profited from a paradigm shift in German filmmaking whose long-term effects are still in play in the German cinema of today. Eleven of the twenty top-grossing German films in the domestic market during the period between 1980–2010 were produced by Neue Constantin, almost all of them by Eichinger himself.<sup>5</sup> Eichinger's global success is evident in both the profitability and the prestige of his films around the world, including his multiple Oscar nominations.

By promoting a new form of market-oriented cinema, Eichinger made certain that films would continue to be 'made in Germany' in the 21st century, and that both domestic and international audiences would watch them.<sup>6</sup> Yet the three films I consider in this chapter—Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (1981); Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*, 1998); and Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006)—also demonstrate how Eichinger's neoliberal cinema and its offspring affirm the victory of global capitalist imperatives over local artistic traditions, whose strategies they appropriate and neutralize. As my feminist analysis of these films bears out, this affirmative vision promotes discourses of personal responsibility, freedom, choice, and self-sacrifice, typically articulated through a misogynist gender politics that frequently sidelines women

4 Uka, 'Der deutsche Film "schiebt den Blues"', 105.

5 These are, beginning with the most successful, *Der Schuh des Manitu* (Manitu's Shoe, 2001); *(T)Raumschiff Surprise—Periode 1* (Dreamship Surprise – Period 1, 2004); *Der bewegte Mann* (The Moved Man, released in English as *Maybe...Maybe Not*, 1994; see Chapter 5); *The Name of the Rose* (1986); *Das Parfum* (Perfume, 2006); *Werner—Das muss kesseln* (Werner – That's Got to Be Fun, released in English as *Eat My Dust!*, 1996); *Wickie und die starken Männer* (Wickie and the Strong Men, 2009); *Werner—Beinhart* (Werner – Hard as Bone, 1996); *The Neverending Story* (1984); *Christiane F. – Wir Kinder vom Bahnhof Zoo* (Christiane F., 1981); and *Der Untergang* (Downfall, 2004). Eichinger produced all of these except for *(T)Raumschiff Surprise* and *Wickie und die starken Männer*. See <http://www.insidekino.de/DJahr/DAlltimeDeutsch50.htm>.

6 As Halle points out, 'rather than German directors making German films, now industry experts speak of a film as "made in Germany" or from "location Germany" [*Standort Deutschland*]', a shift that Eichinger played a key role in bringing about. Halle, 'German Film, European Film', 252.

or expunges them altogether from the filmic narrative. Building on that analysis, this chapter takes a critical view of the global blockbusters whose form Eichinger helped to engineer, while also recognizing the ingenuity of his strategies and their significance for German film history.

## Producing Global Blockbusters from Location Germany

To this day the top-grossing German film in the U.S. (and among the top-grossing worldwide), *Das Boot* pioneered a range of strategies that helped to shift discourses about and expectations of German cinema. These strategies include a renewed emphasis on stars; stylistic developments like shooting coverage that were previously unusual for German films because of their expense; and visual and narrative innovations designed to increase global competitiveness despite factors like low budgets and the unfamiliarity of the German language to foreign audiences. Inasmuch as Eichinger's stylistic trademarks are all self-consciously adapted from Hollywood to some degree, they align his films with the production values and extradiegetic expectations of Global Hollywood. At the same time, by fulfilling a double function as big-budget domestic successes that could also be marketed to arthouse audiences abroad as specifically German or European cinema, Eichinger's productions represent a kind of reverse engineering of the Global Hollywood strategy to create exportable films that make huge foreign profits. Following on the strategies employed by *Das Boot*, the global blockbusters *Lola rennt* and *Das Leben der Anderen*—respectively the third and second highest grossing German films in the U.S.—also achieved popularity and profitability with innovative production models underpinning new formal and aesthetic effects.<sup>7</sup>

As discussed in Chapter 1, Wim Wenders's *Der Stand der Dinge* and Iris Gusner's *Alle meine Mädchen* employ metacinematic narratives about film production in the 1980s to mediate and reflect on two different conceptions of cinema at the inception of the neoliberal turn: the national-cultural film project of the New German Cinema and DEFA, on the one hand, and the mandate to marketize by creating (transnational) films with commercial appeal, on the other. By contrast, the films discussed in this chapter

7 Ranked at number 24 among highest grossing foreign-language films, *Das Boot* is the top-grossing German-language film of all time in the U.S. followed by *Das Leben der Anderen* (ranked number 25) and *Lola rennt* (ranked number 44). See <https://www.boxofficemojo.com/genres/chart/?id=foreign.htm>.

represent a fundamentally new stage in German film history by resolving the contradiction between the cultural and commercial functions of film. Each film succeeds in competing with Global Hollywood by following a slightly different template for abrogating the cultural/commercial binary: *Das Boot* co-opts elements associated with German art cinema in the context of the transnationally popular war film genre; *Lola rennt* marketizes the German auteur film; and *Das Leben der Anderen* appropriates the German cinematic strategy of defamiliarization for a melodrama designed to elicit cathartic emotions. In this way, each film endows universally familiar aesthetic experiences (connected to genre, auteurism, and cinematic address) with aspects of difference associated with the particularity of German (film) history. The resulting global success of *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* is especially noteworthy in an era defined by declining state support for film, intensified competition for audience attention due to the rise of the home video market, the concomitant increase in audiovisual and entertainment choices, and the particular difficulties faced by filmmakers in small national markets like Germany in competing with the massive productions of a few dominant global media conglomerates.

*Lola rennt* was produced by X-Filme Creative Pool, the immensely successful production company co-founded by director Tom Tykwer in 1994 together with producer Stefan Arndt and directors Wolfgang Becker and Dani Levy. Modelled on the Hollywood company United Artists (founded in 1919 by Charlie Chaplin, Mary Pickford, Douglas Fairbanks, and D.W. Griffith), X-Filme Creative Pool describes its project as producing 'challenging (audience) films – or as "Variety" called them "smart movies people want to see".<sup>8</sup> As the motto on X-Filme's profile page attests – 'Film is like life after editing the boring parts' – the company's production strategy overtly departs from the tradition of depicting the ordinary in European art film, while retaining other elements of that tradition such as attention to artistry and an emphasis on quality content. X-Filme follows an integrated model from conception through production to distribution, and the company is noteworthy for its pursuit of new technologies for production and distribution across multiple platforms. Many of its biggest commercial and critical successes have been international co-productions, such as *Cloud Atlas* (2012), co-directed by Tom Tykwer with Lilly and Lana Wachowski, the most expensive independently financed European film of all time, and the Michael Haneke pictures *Das weiße Band* (*The White Ribbon*, 2009), which won the Palme D'Or at Cannes, and *Amour* (2012), which won both the Palme D'Or and the Oscar for Best

8 X-Filme Creative Pool, Website.

Foreign Language Film. The fact that these three films were shot in English, German, and French respectively reflects the transnational and multilingual production model pursued by X-Filme, whose production code specifically eschews traditional comedies, remakes, and literary adaptations of German classics because of their limited appeal to audiences abroad.<sup>9</sup> More recently, the company has achieved international success with the streaming series *Babylon Berlin* (2017-), the most expensive non-English-language television production ever, which was facilitated by an innovative public-private financing model. However, *Lola rennt* remains the biggest hit of all time for X-Filme and one that continues to drive the company's formula for success.

*Das Leben der Anderen* was produced by Wiedemann & Berg Filmproduktion, at the time a very young company founded by two film school classmates of director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck, with whom he had collaborated on several short films made during his Munich studies. In many ways imitating Eichinger's production strategy, Max Wiedemann and Quirin Berg have positioned themselves as auteur producers whose profile 'stands for successful cinema films',<sup>10</sup> consisting of a mixed production roster designed to appeal to both German and international audiences. Wiedemann & Berg achieved such a marked success with their very first film production—*Das Leben der Anderen* sold 2.4 million tickets in Germany alone and won the Oscar for Best Foreign Language Film—in part by signing a lucrative pre-production deal with Buena Vista International, the international distribution arm of the Walt Disney company, which secured international distribution rights to the film in return for a large infusion of capital. This deal helped the filmmakers to maintain very high production values for *Das Leben der Anderen*, a strategy they have subsequently pursued with international partners such as Sony Pictures and Netflix, notably with *Dark* (2017-2020), the first Netflix series produced entirely in Germany. Meanwhile, well-known comedies like *Männerherzen* (*Men in the City*, 2009) and *Willkommen bei den Hartmanns* (*Welcome to Germany*, 2016) have proved remarkably popular on the German market.

Key to the particular production strategies underpinning the global success of *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* is the way that they universalize familiar elements of German national cinema, in terms of both content and form. Their narratives rely on images of and associations with the specific trajectory of German history in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century (World War II, post-unification Berlin, and the East German past respectively),

9 X-Filme Creative Pool, 'Eins, zwei, drei...X Filme', 41.

10 Wiedemann & Berg, Website.

but their depiction of this history aims to transcend time and space rather than focusing on the particularity of the German context. In this way, all three films participate in the dominant neoliberal tendency to normalize the German past. Likewise, they draw on widespread associations with German film and cultural history but simultaneously evacuate familiar tropes and icons of their original meanings in order to resignify them for the affirmative and conciliatory schemas of the present.

Characteristic for these films is thus how they decouple aesthetic innovation from political critique, employing formal qualities historically associated with defamiliarization in the service of marketability. In contrast to a trajectory of German filmmaking visible in productions associated with the New German Cinema, DEFA, and the Berlin School discussed elsewhere in this book, whose focus on ordinary life archives Germany's neoliberal transition, *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* turn their lens on the sensational, metaphysical and transcendent. In their focus on the extraordinary, these films draw precisely on the reputation of Germany for producing visually inventive, quality art cinema; experimentation with form is thus as crucial to their unique approach to storytelling as it is to their popular appeal. However, rather than archiving the transformations of daily life, social structures, and the city that emerge through the process of neoliberalization, thereby rendering them visible—as do German films informed by various realist and counter-hegemonic projects—the films addressed in this chapter co-opt the forms of countercinema for commercial purposes at the same time as they anticipate or even foretell latent traits of global capitalism and neoliberal cinema that will subsequently become manifest. The result is a disorganized filmic language, a key characteristic of the German cinema of neoliberalism. As I argue here, this language is nascent in *Das Boot*, a film that predicts the success of the subsequent global blockbusters *Lola rennt* and *Das Leben der Anderen*, the latter presenting a marked intensification of the market-oriented strategies first debuted by Eichinger.

Three explanatory paradigms have predominated in German film studies for considering the developments I am concerned with here: Eric Rentschler's conception of the 'cinema of consensus'; Randall Halle's explication of the transnationalization of German film 'after Germany'; and theorizations of the heritage genre, elaborated in the German context in particular by Lutz Koepnick. *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* exemplify aspects of all three critical categories, which help to explain the changing production and reception contexts as well as the aesthetic and political transformation of German cinema after the neoliberal turn.

Writing in 2000, Rentschler looked back critically on the first decade of postwall cinema, emphasizing his own 'ardent nostalgia' for the oppositional films of the New German Cinema and his 'marked disdain and bitter sense of loss' regarding the popular cinema that had come to replace it.<sup>11</sup> Rentschler details how postwall directors, all consummate professionals (as opposed to the autodidacts and critics-turned-filmmakers of the NGC), acceded to the now hegemonic view of cinema as a commercial enterprise and a 'site of mass diversion' rather than a forum for aesthetic experimentation and political and moral commentary: 'Quite emphatically, the most prominent directors of the post-wall era aim to please, which is to say that they consciously elicit a new German consensus. In this sense the cinema they champion is one with a decidedly affirmative calling.'<sup>12</sup> Though Rentschler conceives of the cinema of consensus as a postwall development, he traces its rise back to the change in film subsidy laws initiated by West German Minister of the Interior Friedrich Zimmermann in 1983 (see Chapter 1) as well as to changing 'fantasy scenarios and master narratives' underpinning generational relations to film in the postwar period and beyond.<sup>13</sup> In this regard, Rentschler's account is especially important for the way it emphasizes how economic change drives aesthetic and political change in German film during the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century.

Halle charts these same changes by analysing the transnational shift in German film production, arguing that transnationalism forms the 'affiliative and ideational network' that characterizes culture in the era of globalization. While Halle acknowledges how film production is increasingly defined by global capitalism, in contrast to Rentschler he emphasizes 'the vibrancy of cultural production that globalization and transnationalism bring forward'.<sup>14</sup> Describing the transnational aesthetic that emerges from the turn to new ensembles of filmmaking that transcend the confines of the nation, Halle concludes, 'Globalization establishes an expanded trade in images and in so doing opens up the possibilities of representation, enriches the articulations of visual language, and develops a more sophisticated spectator.'<sup>15</sup> Halle also expresses optimism about the positive potential of the shift away from national cinema, which, he argues, displaces ethnocentrism and creates a new 'intersubjective openness': 'The move from "made for Germans" to "made in

11 Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus', 261.

12 Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus', 264.

13 Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus', 271.

14 Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 15.

15 Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 88.



Germany” makes possible films that mark a subtle but significant aesthetic shift in the representation of the lives of Germans, of life in Germany. In the products of transformed national film industries we find models for a reimagination of community.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, for Halle, the emphasis on profitability and self-sustainability in the film industry produces a filmmaking practice that foregrounds entertainment while also heightening critical awareness of cultural difference and revealing openness to experimentation with film form.

This reimagining of community is a key premise of the German heritage film, the wave of historical films that Lutz Koepnick describes as ‘a symptomatic and theoretically challenging expression of postmodern globalization’.<sup>17</sup> German heritage films stage conciliatory narratives that ‘present the texture of the past as a source of visual attractions and pleasures’, repackaging history as an object of mass identification and consumption.<sup>18</sup> Emerging in the 1990s, these films use melodramatic German-Jewish love stories to normalize the past, representing the Nazi period not only as an era of terror and tragedy, but also as one filled with catchy songs, cool costumes with retro-vintage appeal, and an air of dangerous adventure. A hybrid genre, the heritage film mediates elements of art cinema and popular culture, presenting an essentially conservative ideology in tandem with a multicultural vision of the past that challenges dominant views of gender and ethnicity. Heritage films are characterized by high production values, and they privilege setting over narrative, and *mise-en-scène* over editing. Yet unlike costume dramas, which generally use history as a backdrop, heritage films are actively involved in negotiating and re-presenting the past. While he is critical of their affirmative politics, Koepnick also suggests that heritage films participate in reconstructing a pluralistic vision of the German past that reflects, at least to some extent, more progressive understandings of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and sexuality in the present: ‘Despite their overt nostalgia, these films actively reinterpret the past according to changing views of history, memory, gender, and ethnicity

16 Halle, ‘German Film, European Film’, 258.

17 Koepnick, “Amerika gibt’s überhaupt nicht”, 194. Pioneered in Britain in the 1980s, the heritage film (a term coined by British film theorist Andrew Higson and much debated in Anglo-American film scholarship) designated a production trend that repackaged British history in affirmative terms coherent with the rise of Thatcherism. Reflecting a postmodern awareness of their own constructedness and an emphasis on setting, heritage films are a primary genre of the cinema of neoliberalism.

18 Koepnick, ‘Reframing the Past’, 50.

within the bounds of what we must understand as a self-confident mode of European popular filmmaking.”<sup>19</sup>

My analysis builds on these three influential paradigms for describing the changing landscape of German cinema, while accentuating how the context of neoliberalism shapes and takes shape in the consensus-driven political agendas, transnational ensembles, and affirmative aesthetics of German films from the 1980s on. At the same time, this chapter expands on my previous discussion of Deleuze’s film theory to consider its relevance for understanding the popular, market-oriented filmmaking that emerged in the wake of the neoliberal turn. Deleuze’s account of film history focuses on a canon of auteur films defined by Parisian cineastes and largely excludes industrial entertainment films from further consideration within the paradigm of *Cinema*. Even as he argues for the critical potential of modern cinema’s aesthetic practices, Deleuze generally downplays the political and social contexts in which they operate. However, by considering here how Deleuze’s paradigm connects to popular, commercial films like *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen*, I demonstrate how *Cinema* can open up generative standpoints for the analysis of market-oriented filmmaking. By the same token, my analysis suggests that the disappearance of politics in Deleuze’s *Cinema* is symptomatic for the era of neoliberalism, whose hegemonic mode of discourse works precisely to erase politics from view. As Fredric Jameson has written of Deleuze in a different context, his writing is ‘prophetic of tendencies latent within capitalism itself’.<sup>20</sup> The three films discussed here may suggest some unforeseen consequences of Deleuze’s characterization of film history, inasmuch as they appropriate for the cinema of neoliberalism the elements he identifies as critical forces of art cinema.

## The Cinema of Neoliberalism and the Time-Image

As discussed in Chapter 1, Deleuze’s account of film history, conceived and written during the period of neoliberal intensification in the 1980s, responded to the widespread perception of a film crisis by investigating cinema’s past and present, and theorizing its future, at a moment characterized by the increased commercialization and marketization of film; the erosion of state sponsorship for filmmaking; and technological changes affecting production, distribution, and reception. Looking back at postwar

19 Koepnick, ‘Reframing the Past’, 56.

20 Jameson, ‘The End of Temporality’, 711.

art cinema from the standpoint of the 1980s, Deleuze suggests that World War II brought about a break in narrative cinema, such that 'time is no longer subordinated to movement, but rather movement to time'.<sup>21</sup> For Deleuze, the rupture of teleological conceptions of historical time following the cataclysms of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century underpins a shift from a cinema in which action (the movement-image) determines the succession of time to a cinema dedicated to capturing images of time directly. Displaying the coexistence of multiple layers or 'folds' of time, modern films respond to the bankruptcy of the movement-image by 'making visible these relationships of time which can only appear in a creation of the image'.<sup>22</sup> Deleuze's overall project traces the decline of cinema's potential as an art of the masses in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century through its instrumentalization for the domination of the masses at mid-century to its turn inward to metacinematic storytelling about film form and the 'camera-money exchange' in the later 20<sup>th</sup> century. Deleuze writes of how 'space and time becoming more and more expensive in the modern world, art had to make itself international industrial art, that is, cinema, in order to *buy* space and time as "imaginary warrants of human capital"',<sup>23</sup> suggesting a direct link among market forces, internationalization, and the shift from the movement-image to the time-image that my reading of global blockbusters from location Germany makes explicit.

A central facet of the time-image, embodied for Deleuze by the crystal, is the function of splitting: 'since the past is constituted not after the present that it was but at the same time, time has to split itself in two at each moment as present and past [...], it has to split the present into two heterogeneous directions, one of which is launched towards the future while the other falls into the past'.<sup>24</sup> This splitting, or forking, time entails paradoxical notions such as 'contingent futures', 'impossible presents', and 'not-necessarily true pasts' that lead to a fundamental questioning of truth and ultimately give rise to a new form of narrative: 'narration ceases to be truthful, that is, to claim to be true, and becomes fundamentally falsifying'.<sup>25</sup> In contrast to conventional fictions, which posit their own veracity and conform to common-sense conceptions of space and time, 'falsifying narratives' subvert truth by abandoning those conceptions. Certainty about past, present, and future, and how these moments in time exist in relation to each other, is cast

21 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, xi.

22 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, xii.

23 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 78.

24 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 81.

25 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 131.

into doubt. In the case of cinema, this doubt is created, for example, through a deliberate confounding of continuity editing; rather than exhibiting clear connections across space and time, editing choices link noncontiguous spaces and unrelated times, causing viewers to question space-time relationships, to deliberate upon the constructed nature of truth, and to consider the role of their own subjective perception.

However, as Claire Colebrook argues, 'The importance of Deleuze's definition of modern cinema does not lie in the standard post-modern line that everything is unreal and that we are not sure what reality is any more. Cinema of the time-image, for Deleuze, is a transcendental analysis of the real; it explores all those virtual planes and differences from which actual worlds are possible.'<sup>26</sup> Ultimately, this analysis of the real emerges from the transformative 'power of the false', which is seen in art cinema: 'Only the creative artist takes the power of the false to a degree which is realized, not in form, but in transformation. [...] What the artist is, is *creator of truth*, because truth is not to be achieved, formed, or reproduced; it has to be created'.<sup>27</sup> The generative problematization of truth in falsifying narratives, which allow cinema to represent both the labyrinthine quality of time and the subjective nature of perception, are exemplified for Deleuze by the classics of the European New Wave, particularly Alain Resnais's *L'Année dernière à Marienbad* (*Last Year at Marienbad*, 1961), as well as in Italian neorealism and the New German Cinema. For Deleuze, falsifying narration is a primary facet of modern art cinema's formal-aesthetic structure, but also of its political valence. As D. N. Rodowick explains, 'Chronosigns [signs of the time-image] and falsifying narration augment our powers of life by affirming change and creating images of thought that put us in direct contact with change and becoming as fundamental forces'.<sup>28</sup> At its best, cinema will literally make us see and think differently, bearing transformative potential for the individual viewer, for film form, and for the system of late capitalism (and this project of making us see and think differently is one that practitioners of political cinema including feminist filmmakers and the neo-auteurs of the Berlin School, among others, continue to pursue, as we will see in later chapters).

Yet, beginning with *Das Boot*, a kind of falsifying narration also comes to dominate in popular blockbusters, which appropriate this critical force. The tendency of neoliberal cinema to co-opt falsifying narration reaches its apex

26 Colebrook, *Understanding Deleuze*, 160.

27 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 146.

28 Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 137.

with *Lola rennt*, a film that encapsulates the time-image by focusing on the splitting of time into impossible presents, all of which notably coalesce around money. The appropriation of falsifying narration also characterizes many of the *Ostalgie* films of the 2000s, most paradigmatically *Good Bye, Lenin!* (2003), which relies on the device of the not-necessarily true past in rethinking GDR history in consumerist terms. A co-opted form of falsifying narration may also be found in the German heritage film which, as Koepnick has suggested, reframes the Holocaust to 'enact forms of German-Jewish solidarity that surpass public history'.<sup>29</sup> Combining aspects of the *Ostalgie* production trend and the German heritage film, *Das Leben der Anderen* exemplifies the co-optation of falsifying narration, enacted through the remixing of historical signifiers in the service of achieving greater filmic veracity and through the repurposing of aesthetic signs associated with both DEFA and political modernism in the service of affirmative culture.<sup>30</sup>

Along with their appropriation of the critical force of falsifying narration, *Das Boot* and *Lola rennt* in particular also make ample use of what Deleuze terms 'pure optical-sound situations', scenes in which conventional links between action and reaction are ruptured so that we experience only the pure audiovisual qualities of the film. In modern cinema, pure optical-sound situations replace the action-image of the classical era: 'This is a cinema of the seer and no longer of the agent.'<sup>31</sup> Again, this change was specifically brought about by World War II: 'The fact is that, in Europe, the post-war period has greatly increased the situations which we no longer know how to react to, in spaces which we no longer know how to describe',<sup>32</sup> leading to the turn from movement-image to time-image.<sup>33</sup> While Deleuze points out that most commercial films throughout the postwar period continue to rely on the action-image along with a narrative structured by a conflict, or duel, and its resolution, 'The soul of cinema demands increasing thought, even if thought begins by undoing the system of actions, perceptions, and affections on which the cinema had fed up to that point. We hardly believe any longer that a global situation can give rise to an action which is capable of modifying it – no more than we believe that an action can force a situation

29 Koepnick, 'Reframing the Past', 48.

30 See Schmidt, 'Between Authors and Agents.'

31 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 2.

32 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, xi.

33 Deleuze argues that the crisis of the action-image originated with neo-realism in Italy: 'The timing is something like: around 1948, Italy; about 1958 France; about 1968, Germany.' He also suggests that elements of the time-image received their fullest realization in the New German Cinema. Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 211.

to disclose itself, even partially.<sup>34</sup> In a context where the links between situation, action, and reaction have dissolved, 'chance becomes the sole guiding thread'<sup>35</sup> of contemporary film narratives, a paradigm that is abundantly evident in the three films discussed in this chapter. In these and many other neoliberal films, chance is linked with the promise of happiness, igniting a sense of possibility that is ultimately as threatening as it is sustaining, thereby operating as a form of cruel optimism.<sup>36</sup> However, while they depict relations of time, the escalating role of chance, and the concomitant challenges to human agency in the global age, *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* do so in ways that often resonate with the agendas of neoliberalism.

### The Crystal-Image of *Das Boot*

*Das Boot* tells the story of the doomed submarine U-96, which sets sail from the French harbour of La Rochelle, travels around the Atlantic, stops in Spanish waters to take on supplies, then proceeds through the Strait of Gibraltar, sinks many leagues under the sea, and finally moors ever so briefly in Italy before it is destroyed in an Allied air raid that maims or kills the boat's entire crew, including its beloved captain, known as Herr Kaleun (Jürgen Prochnow). The only unharmed survivor of the bombing is Leutnant Werner (Herbert Grönemeyer), the journalist who has been assigned to the submarine as a war correspondent, and who is thus notably the only 'outsider' on board the ship.

A film about World War II that very specifically thematizes the crisis of action and changing modes of perception, especially regarding time, that were initiated by the war, *Das Boot* can be productively understood as a 'cinema of the seer' (and the listener) rather than the agent, even as it cannibalizes many laudatory elements of postwar art cinema and NGC in particular. Among the crystal-images specifically discussed by Deleuze in *Cinema* is the ship: 'Seed impregnating the sea, the ship is caught between its two crystalline faces: a limpid face which is the ship from above, where everything should be visible, according to order; an opaque face which is the ship from below, and which occurs underwater, the black face of the

34 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 206.

35 Deleuze, *Cinema 1*, 207.

36 See Berlant, *Cruel Optimism*.

engine-room stokers.<sup>37</sup> Hinging on this double or split quality of the ship, its cinematic representation initiates a circuit of exchange between the visible and the invisible, the performative and the hidden, suggesting the possibility of 'a simultaneity of presents in different worlds'.<sup>38</sup> Constructed from its opening sequence onward around the central tropes of invisibility and performativity (a *making visible*), *Das Boot* reflects the doubling and splitting analysed by Deleuze.

While on the surface, *Das Boot* appears to embody a traditionally suspenseful, action-driven plot, in fact we see very little action, and to the extent that the crew does engage in 'duels', these do not bring about conventional resolutions. While the submarine is ostensibly deployed on a combat mission, its journey around the Atlantic seems largely aimless, as the crew's hopes for engagement, which are deferred again and again, rely on flawed information or chance encounters. In place of action, the film offers pure optical-sound situations in the form of lengthy sequences in which Herr Kaleun and his crew search the seas for British convoys, using a variety of audiovisual prosthetics, including sonar, headphones, radar screens, gauges, periscope, and binoculars. We hardly see these men 'act'; the film's suspense is constituted for the viewer not through spectacular battle scenes (of which the film exhibits only a very few), but rather through the process of listening and viewing, making the inaudible audible and the invisible visible. The creation of optical-sound situations is accentuated on a formal level by the use of handheld cameras; unique lighting schemes (with red, blue, and green filters); and audio tracks that foreground the ping of the submarine's sonar, the constant ticking of clocks, the clicks of gauges measuring the submarine's depth and weight, and the gurgling sounds of the ocean.

On a formal and diegetic level, *Das Boot* made a virtue of the financial limitations of German film production in the 1980s, ingeniously employing a ship to mobilize the gaze of the spectator not through spectacular special effects, but by transforming the (normally invisible) circumscribed internal spaces and technological dynamics of the submarine into a cinematic spectacle. An ideologically promiscuous film, *Das Boot* marshals viewer identifications in order to achieve sympathy for its protagonists, German soldiers and Nazis, thereby offering an affirmative vision of World War II.<sup>39</sup>

37 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 72-73.

38 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 103.

39 Brad Prager notes the representation of soldiers as victims in *Das Boot*, arguing that the film 'can be understood as a persistent symptom of the collective denial of the past'. My reading

Producer Günter Rohrbach notes that in *Das Boot* ‘except for one dance number, not a single woman appears!’<sup>40</sup> Yet in appealing to both male and female spectators, the film mobilizes a range of gender performances and identifications, which foreground its double-edged politics. As my feminist analysis of the film helps to establish, *Das Boot* deploys gender and sexual mobility as a key facet of its global appeal, but in ways that ultimately must be understood as coherent with its affirmative agenda.

*Das Boot* floats on multiple planes, enacting multiple histories, always appearing to be one thing while simultaneously embodying another. The diegetic, formal, and ideological strategies of producer Rohrbach, director Wolfgang Petersen, and distributor Eichinger facilitated the unparalleled domestic and global success of *Das Boot* and of its filmmakers, who, largely on this one film’s merits, went on to pursue international careers.<sup>41</sup> The success of *Das Boot* hinged not least on the filmmakers’ nuanced appeal to diverse audience segments, as well as their deft navigation of changing technologies for film exhibition and reception.<sup>42</sup> At the same time, its narrative and aesthetic structures emerge in tandem with the producers’ and distributors’ efforts to create a financially viable German film, or to put it in different terms, to transform the German film into a privately financed market commodity.

In *Das Boot*, we find a film that deploys notions of individual freedom and personal responsibility so compellingly (even in the context of a wartime

builds on Prager’s analysis, which also emphasizes the film’s transitional status in the shift from *Autorenkino* to commercial entertainment cinema. Prager, ‘Beleaguered Under the Sea’, 242.

40 Rohrbach, ‘Nachwort’, 216.

41 Rohrbach, who became CEO of Bavaria Studios in 1979, quickly made his name there with his first two big-budget productions, Fassbinder’s 14-part miniseries *Berlin Alexanderplatz* (1980) and *Das Boot*. Rohrbach later became a pioneer of the German heritage film, producing international prestige movies like *Stalingrad* (1992), *Aimée und Jaguar* (1998), and *Anonyma – eine Frau in Berlin* (*A Woman in Berlin*, 2008). Petersen is sometimes referred to as Germany’s greatest cinematic export—he went on to become the director of a series of immensely successful blockbusters that reinvent the formula of *Das Boot* within the confines of Hollywood spaces, among them *Air Force One* (1997), *A Perfect Storm* (2000), and *Poseidon* (2006).

42 Conceived from the outset for a variety of exhibition contexts, *Das Boot* was screened first in cinemas worldwide and then released as a popular television miniseries in the FRG in 1985. The film’s afterlife (and ongoing profitability) derives from multiple release versions for the cinema and home video markets over the last forty years, including both the original theatrical release and the longer miniseries version marketed in various formats; a Director’s Cut exhibited in cinemas worldwide in 1997 and released on DVD; and, in 2011, Blu-ray DVD versions released to coincide with the film’s thirtieth anniversary. My analysis relies on the original theatrical release from 1981 as well as the Director’s Cut on DVD (Sony Pictures Home Entertainment, 1997).



submarine staffed by young men shipped out to die by the Nazis) that, as James Clarke writes, ‘You don’t feel as if you are watching a film about “the enemy.”’<sup>43</sup> This pioneering form of falsifying narration, which enables a future trajectory of blockbusters to emerge, offers an early example of what Koepnick calls ‘heritage identity’, an objectified, eminently consumable form of self-representation that appeals to global tourists and local inhabitants alike ‘by placing the nation’s subjects outside of their own culture, asking them to look at their own lives like tourists who typify different cultures as sites of radical—and, hence, pleasurable—alterity’.<sup>44</sup>

In an early sequence, the U-96 chases a British naval convoy that has been traced by another German submarine. As the sequence unfolds over many minutes, the crew of the U-96 uses every mechanism in their power to track the invisible convoy; as they race over the ocean in a raging storm, Herr Kaleun curses the weather as he tries in vain to spot a ship with binoculars and telescopes. Finally, he orders the submarine to dive. Leutnant Werner, who is still learning the ropes of naval life, asks why the boat is submerging; the second officer (Martin Semmelrogge) explains to him, ‘In this weather, we can *hear* more down here than we can *see* up there’. With Werner, the film’s viewers experience the eerie underwater quiet that replaces the roar of the stormy seas above; with the radioman Hinrich (Heinz Hoenig), we strain to hear the mechanical sounds of engines or underwater bombs that might indicate the proximity of a naval fleet. Again and again, the film’s editing emphasizes the concentrated gazes of the crew as they look or listen, intercut with extreme close-ups of measuring gauges, a stopwatch, or the view through a periscope. These optical-sound situations foreground the pure audiovisual qualities of the film in ways that contribute to its entertainment value; like its appropriation of the falsifying narrative, *Das Boot* co-opts this form of modern cinema, draining it of critical potential and employing it in the service of affirmative politics, in particular a normalized view of the German past.

Despite the lack of action, it is no accident that German producers seeking a new strategy for creating a market-driven cinema turned first to the genre of the war film, whose ideology dovetails with the ideology of neoliberalism. As Halle points out, ‘the war genre, the genre once singularly most important for the public production and consumption of national narratives and symbols, proves to have a great deal of resiliency’ for the transnational

43 Clarke, *War Films*, 112–113.

44 Koepnick, “Amerika gibt’s überhaupt nicht”, 199.

aesthetic.<sup>45</sup> Transnationalism is inherent to the war film genre, which is typically a site of multilingualism and cultural contact, and which often serves as a mouthpiece for humanitarianism and world peace, while at the same time paradoxically mobilizing the violent pleasures and antagonistic mentalities of the battlefield.<sup>46</sup>

Central to the affirmative vision of *Das Boot* are several important conventions of the mainstream war film: war is conceived of as an end in itself, utterly divorced from its historical or ideological context, which helps foster identification with the plight of the soldiers. The soldiers, in turn, are portrayed as individuals, who are vested with personal responsibility to ensure their own survival and that of their compatriots, a mission that is again cut off from any larger ideological struggle or sense of cause-and-effect. In the case of *Das Boot*, the sailors in the submarine are quite literally separated off spatially from the larger battlefield for the majority of the film, which aids the film's historical amnesia, since the markers of war—and not least, of Nazi ideology, nationalism, and anti-Semitism—would be much more obvious above ground. Already from the title sequence, which tells us that '40,000 German sailors served on U-boats in World War II/30,000 never returned', the crew of *Das Boot* are cast as underdogs, indeed as victims. Portrayed as neither German soldiers nor Nazis, these men don't wear uniforms but rather fashionable sweaters, and we hardly see a swastika for the entire 150 minutes (209 for the Director's Cut) of the film. In fact, the one soldier who does wear a uniform and who overtly performs Nazism is the first officer (Hubertus Bengsch), an ethnic German who grew up in Mexico and volunteered for naval service, and who is taunted, even castigated for his devotion to Nazi ideology by all the men on board, not least the captain.

*Das Boot* purports to create a space of difference—the film's gripping plot revolves around the men on board overcoming personality conflicts to work together, and one of the film's central appeals is the way the camera dwells on and relishes different physiognomies—all the while falsifying the fact that the mission of the German navy during World War II not only presumes a fundamental (racial and ethnic) sameness among the sailors, but also relies on radical exclusions. The brilliant innovation here is the use of a small, separate space, which demarcates very narrow thresholds of visibility.

45 Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 98.

46 The paradigmatic film here is Lewis Milestone's Hollywood adaptation of *All Quiet on the Western Front* (1930), prior to *Das Boot* the premiere film to humanize the German soldier for international audiences, and the first film to win an Oscar for best picture.

The submarine never comes near to German soil; the only sense that the sailors are Germans comes from a few cherished photos of the *Heimat* that they display in sentimental moments. Since the film was shot silent and dubbed after the fact, and since it is regularly watched in international release in dubbed versions, not even the German language plays an integral role in establishing national culture in the film. This is heightened by the fact that the captain inspires the affection and loyalty of his crew by regularly turning off droning Nazi radio speeches to play popular phonograph records, many of them non-German, such as 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary'. In terms of language, story, and form, this is literally a deterritorialized German cinema, a strategy integral to the twofold goal of *Das Boot* to promote agendas of normalization and globalization as part and parcel of a globally profitable, market-driven cinema.

With the dual leads of Prochnow and Grönemeyer, the film not only decentres its male protagonist, but in fact splits him in two, creating a crystal-image of masculinity. This strategy is significant for both the inverted specular relations and for the historical agenda of *Das Boot*. As a film without women and one much concerned with masculinity in crisis, *Das Boot* makes its male characters both objects of the gaze and voyeurs, who look rather than transact, a fact which was also crucial to the film's appeal to (female) viewers. By emphasizing Leutnant Werner's witnessing gaze, the film foregrounds Herr Kaleun's specularity, his status as an object to be looked at, thereby dispersing his authority. At the same time, *Das Boot* relies on the heartthrob appeal of the pop singer Grönemeyer, who plays Leutnant Werner as an exemplar of vulnerable, modern masculinity.

While making the perilous journey through the Strait of Gibraltar, the U-96 sustains damage in a raid and sinks to the bottom of the Mediterranean, where it springs a number of leaks. Once again, the action is deferred through recourse to a cinema of the seer and listener. A group of officers collects around the depth gauge as the boat sinks, gritting their teeth and sweating. Herr Kaleun calls out orders to the crew, but all his attempts to raise the sinking ship are in vain. A sailor has been injured in the blast; he writhes in pain, bleeding and suffocating, a metonymy for the damaged, airless boat. As the boat sinks into the ocean, the camera zooms in on the depth gauge, whose needle slowly inches into the red. The men begin to groan and shake; some exhibit wide-eyed resignation. Leutnant Werner, still a submarine novice, looks horrified. The chief engineer (Klaus Wennemann) calls out, 'The boat can't be stopped!', and we watch the needle inch downward, 'Passing 230... 240 meters...250...260 meters!' The needle passes by the

highest number on the gauge, pointing perilously downward, and we hear glass shatter and plugs pop, before the U-96 crashes to a standstill on the ocean floor, 280 meters below the surface.

Throughout this sequence, the editing emphasizes the men's emotional response to the compression of time and space in the grounded submarine, as the water encroaches and available oxygen diminishes. Exhibiting men sweating, shaking, and weeping, the scene places traumatized masculinity on display. While the film's narrative logic relies on the crew successfully fixing the boat, it is notable that, for the most part, we don't witness the action that leads to this resolution. Instead, we see Werner as he watches the clock (an omnipresent pocket watch that dangles into the frame); having fallen asleep, he awakes with a start to look at the clock again. Believing themselves about to die, Werner and Herr Kaleun weep together, only to see the chief engineer emerge from the nether regions of the boat to announce meekly that he has thoroughly repaired it. 'Listen up', shouts Herr Kaleun, 'We're going to blow all tanks and see if we can get off our bottom!' The boat does in fact rise to the surface one last time, but for Herr Kaleun, death is only deferred. As Brad Prager has argued, 'the past is given meaning and rendered comprehensible for its broad audience through the depiction of the death of the submarine captain [...] whose death stands in for the fate of the fighting nation'.<sup>47</sup> By killing off its hero, a death eye-witnessed—and subsequently born witness to in prose—by Leutnant Werner (a stand-in for Lothar-Günther Buchheim, the author of the book on which the film was based), *Das Boot* ultimately recoups male defeat, so that privileging male lack becomes an affirmative strategy in representing World War II and the Nazi war machine.

*Das Boot* corresponds closely to Deleuze's cinema of the time-image, which it co-opts for commercial entertainment. Not only are the dispersive situation, chance as guiding principle, and the form of the aimless and labyrinthine voyage used to create a hybrid narrative which capitalized on globally appealing elements of modern cinema, but *Das Boot* also operates with plot and clichés in ways characteristic of the time-image. Rodowick summarizes Deleuze's discussion of the 'consciousness of clichés' that preceded the emergence of the time-image: 'without the context of a global ideology and a belief in real connections, the action-image is replaced by clichés. The double sense of the French use of the term should be maintained: both tired images and snapshots of random impressions'.<sup>48</sup>

47 Prager, 'Beleaguered Under the Sea', 247.

48 Rodowick, *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*, 76.

Building on modern art cinema's conscious use of clichés, the cinema of neoliberalism once more repackages clichés—along with audiovisual attractions, generic plot forms, and historical signifiers—for pleasurable consumption. As Koepnick points out, this double-edged gesture works along multiple registers in the heritage film to create market appeal at home and abroad, a point echoed by Halle in his reading of Petersen's films. Halle suggests that successful transnational films employ national-cultural clichés to signify a double valence that is crucial to their appeal. For example, Petersen's Hollywood blockbuster *Air Force One* (1997), in many ways a direct adaptation of *Das Boot*, appealed to U.S. audiences with highly patriotic images, while audiences abroad often interpreted these as satire.<sup>49</sup> Yet both the political affinities of Petersen's films and the double-edged play with clichés upon which they rely appear problematic for Halle's argument that just as 'the transnational aesthetic accelerates the global trade in images, it expands the possibilities of cultural production'.<sup>50</sup> Petersen's use of national-cultural clichés in *Air Force One* simply inverted the strategies he used in *Das Boot*, which capitalized on the worldwide interest in Nazism and World War II, achieving a normalized representation of 'the enemy' as heroic soldiers and eliciting sympathy for Germans as war victims through its representation of the sailors' valour even in the face of their death mission. The film's ending, in which these war heroes are then killed in an Allied air raid, underscores its purportedly 'antiwar' message. Emphasizing the crystalline quality of the film's representational strategies, Prager suggests that in this regard *Das Boot* shares much in common with popular Vietnam war films from the late 1970s and 1980s, films that fostered a collective denial of guilt via empathy with individual soldiers.

Jaimey Fisher has suggested a model for linking Deleuze's film theory to gender in the context of German cinema, arguing that 'a gendered social crisis contributed to the emergence of what Deleuze calls the time-image'.<sup>51</sup> The postwar period in Europe was characterized not only by a general undermining of human agency, but specifically by a crisis of masculine agency in tandem with a disruption of conventional family and gender roles, nowhere more so than in Germany.<sup>52</sup> As Fisher demonstrates, this crisis of hegemonic masculinity closely parallels the collapse of classical cinema traced by Deleuze: postwar films 'depict the breakdown of the

49 Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 41.

50 Halle, *German Film after Germany*, 88.

51 Fisher, 'On the Ruins of Masculinity', 27.

52 See Baer, *Dismantling the Dream Factory*.

action-image via the failure of traditional masculinity'.<sup>53</sup> Writing about German rubble films, Fisher points out that even though these films strive toward a reconstruction of the action-image along with a rehabilitation of male subjectivity, they often end up 'privileging the male subject who has embraced lack over the male subject who simply disavows it, that is, over the male subject who would normally play the hero in the conventional action-image'.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, *Das Boot* strives to reassert masculine agency but ends up privileging male lack once again.

Featuring decentred male protagonists who are noteworthy for their immersion in pure optical-sound situations, and who turn out to be 'heroes' although, for the most part, they lack agency, *Das Boot* portrays the loss of faith in patriarchy, ideological fatigue, and general male defeat that emblemizes the cinema of the time-image. As we have seen, the film inverts conventional modes of specularity; by dispersing masculine agency and privileging male lack, it also opens up new viewing positions, mobilizing voyeurism and desire on the part of female spectators. Fisher points out that at historical moments of crisis traumatized masculinity can expose male lack, allowing different masculinities to emerge.<sup>55</sup> *Das Boot* portrays such an historical moment (World War II), while also occupying another at its moment of production, when the gains of second-wave feminism had challenged popular cinema's representation of gender.

From the outset of the film, *Das Boot* is constructed around the central tropes of invisibility and performativity, a crystal-image that comes together in its representation of gender and sexuality. Even before the credit sequence, the film begins with an auditory signal, the 'ping' of the sonar system employed by British destroyers targeting the U-96. This ping re-emerges during scenes of heightened suspense throughout the film, encoding the submarine's invisibility as it dodges British depth charges. After the credits, the film's first shot presents a green screen—a blank slate reminiscent of studio screens used to produce special effects—but when we look closely, a very phallic submarine slowly emerges from underwater obscurity. By contrast, the first above-ground sequence immediately establishes a visible performance of masculinity, when we view a group of sailors who stand by the roadside, open their trousers, and, genitals in hand, piss in unison all over the car that is bringing the U-96's commanding officers to the mooring docks. We follow the officers, including Herr Kaleun and Werner,

53 Fisher, 'Deleuze in a Ruinous Context', 56.

54 Fisher, 'Deleuze in a Ruinous Context', 56.

55 Fisher, 'Deleuze in a Ruinous Context', 58.

the war correspondent, into a shoreside bordello. Here we see the film's only women, French prostitutes who perform cabaret songs, along with naval officers and crewmembers partying before their deployment. Two things are notable about this sequence. First is the grotesque representation of drunken men, exemplars of masculinity in crisis. We see men not only urinating, but bleeding, vomiting, and collapsing in their own excretions—a foregrounding of bodily fluids and physicality, which is not conventionally associated with masculinity but which connects the men metonymically with the ocean. Second is this scene's explicit commentary on Nazism and masculinity, in the form of a drunken toast given by the submarine captain Thomsen, who has been awarded the iron cross. Thomsen's ironic toast 'To our glorious, abstinent, and womanless Führer!' verges on insubordination until Thomsen concludes by joking that Hitler has shown Churchill where to stick his cigar. Like Hitler, both the submarine crew and the movie itself are abstinent and womanless, and this aspect of Thomsen's toast will be pathetically echoed by Werner later in the movie. Believing himself about to die, Werner cites the Nazi writer Rudolf G. Binding, "Standing before the inexorable. Where no mother looks for us, where no woman crosses our path. Where only reality reigns, gruesome and grand." I was completely besotted by it.' Werner's citation invokes a longstanding convention of poetic representations of war (and of the war film genre), emphasizing battle as the only truly authentic experience, and one that is notably womanless.

Thomsen's toast not only defines the submarine as a homosocial space, but also includes a more explicitly sexual homology between the submarine and Churchill's cigar, which will be echoed again and again as the U-96 squeezes into and through tight spaces. Thomsen's speech sets up a motif that is replayed in words and images throughout the film: the motif of *Arschbacken* [butt cheeks]. Thomsen defines the 'Quexen', the extremely young recruits being sent off to battle with little preparation, by their clenched butt cheeks and their tightly clamped genitalia: 'Butt cheeks together, clamped-down balls, and the belief in the Führer in their gazes.' The single bathroom on the submarine is lit up by a sign depicting an androgynous ass with an anchor tattoo. And in a scene that condenses *Das Boot's* representation of gender, we encounter numerous bare butts once more. Here, the crew celebrates success in battle with a drag show. A band plays, 'Yes! We have no bananas', and a soldier performs as Josephine Baker, in blackface with fake breasts and a faux-banana-leaf skirt. Shortly after this remarkable performance of both ethnic drag and cross-dressing, we see a close-up of a sailor's bare bottom and witness the diagnosis of an outbreak of crabs. While the sailors scream hilariously, 'Gib dem Luder ordentlich Puder!' [Give the floozy a good



4. Homoerotic discourse in Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (1981): Bare bottoms on display.

dose of powder (medicine)], at the officers' table Herr Kaleun notices crabs visibly crawling in the first officer's eyebrows. When he seeks attention at the medic's station, the first officer finds a whole line of men naked from the waist down (see Illustration 4), a sight that the film plays for laughs, since the Nazi first officer is known to be a prude.

What are we to make of the foregrounding of gender performances and homoerotic discourse in *Das Boot*? Prager points out that at various moments in the film—including when they listen to foreign sailing songs on the phonograph—the crew 'cross-identify as the enemy'. A very specific form of the crystal-image, this cross-identification enables the film's discourse of normalization. Something similar takes place in the film's representation of gender, where we see men enacting a whole range of masculinities—both gender identities and sexualities—which are permitted only and precisely because *Das Boot* is a womanless space.

This mobility of gender, enabled by the war film, constitutes an important facet of *Das Boot*'s global appeal. By introducing both an explicitly sexualized homoeroticism and a range of masculinities into the film, the filmmakers capitalized on audience expectations of European movies (and in this case of art films associated with NGC) to provide more frank depictions of sexuality than Hollywood. At the same time, the filmmakers built on familiar representations of masculinity in the internationally successful Vietnam war films that Annette Brauerhoch has described: 'Masculine, muscled, beautiful men are put on display, who are pursuing dangerous, violent activities. But despite this fact, they are not classical heroes, since they are not endowed with attributes of power, dominance,



or inviolability'.<sup>56</sup> Brauerhoch argues that female viewers gravitate to war films because they offer a moment of control otherwise unavailable in dominant spectatorial relations; moreover she proposes that war films mobilize for all viewers sexual fantasies 'in which sexualized power is played out violently, but at the same time the violence of sexuality can be enjoyed'.<sup>57</sup> Emerging in the era after feminism, war films of the 1980s served a double-edged purpose: on the one hand, they reflected a revisionist history and a conservative world view and sought to rehabilitate masculinity in the face of feminist incursions; on the other hand, they achieved success by mobilizing spectatorial identifications and audiovisual pleasures linked to the representation of male bodies in positions that dominant cinema usually reserves for women. Men in *Das Boot* occupy a range of feminized, objectified, and/or sexualized roles; they are subjected to sadistic acts; they become one with their bodies; they lose control. As Brauerhoch observes, "The role assigned to women is of extraordinary significance for the cohesion of a patriarchal society. [...] Interestingly, in relation to the state and its force, the soldier on the whole comes to occupy a feminized position."<sup>58</sup> Just as war casts soldiers in a feminized position (they have no control over their own bodies; they must be brought into alignment with norms; they must always be ready to serve; they must exemplify the notion of personal responsibility for the sake of the larger good), neoliberalism casts women as its ideal subjects for all the same reasons. Thus, just as *Das Boot* appropriates the filmic language of gender performance and frank sexuality developed in the New German Cinema, the atypical, even feminist viewing positions it mobilizes are also coherent with its affirmative ideology.

As the context of gender helps to make clear, far from creating images of change suggested by Deleuze's conception of the time-image, the falsifying narrative of *Das Boot* is thoroughly in line with neoliberalism, which offers its own falsifying narrative par excellence. By appropriating for its affirmative vision discourses of transnationalism and gender mobility and by developing innovative and profitable production strategies that co-opt the aesthetics and politics of modern art cinema, *Das Boot* laid the groundwork for a new, audience-friendly, market-driven filmmaking practice.

56 Brauerhoch, 'Sexy Soldier', 85.

57 Brauerhoch, 'Sexy Soldier', 85.

58 Brauerhoch, 'Sexy Soldier', 93.

## Time is Manni: *Lola rennt*

Following the course charted by *Das Boot*, Tom Tykwer's acclaimed film *Lola rennt* 'almost single-handedly put an enervated film industry back on the international map'<sup>59</sup> in the 1990s, achieving unparalleled global success with its techno-fuelled depiction of protagonist Lola's race against time to save her boyfriend Manni by scoring DM 100,000 in twenty minutes. Drawing attention to the history of (German) cinema by foregrounding formal techniques such as split screen, slow motion, and jump cuts, and combining 35mm cinematography with still photography (black and white for flashbacks and colour for flash forwards), video, digital effects, gaming iconography, and animation, *Lola rennt* captivated audiences across the world with its mash-up of aesthetic styles and its innovation on the three-act narrative structure.<sup>60</sup> Associated metonymically with the best German films and exemplary of the most laudable tendencies in German film history, *Lola rennt* was at the same time celebrated precisely for its difference from German cinema, evident in its fast pacing and transcendence of the ordinary, as well as in its affirmative qualities. As Owen Evans argues, '*Lola rennt* is a reaffirmation of the potential of humanity, a celebration of the durability of the human spirit.'<sup>61</sup> Indeed, Tykwer's rejection of the political critique of NGC and his simultaneous repurposing of its aesthetic strategies prompt Muriel Cormican to view *Lola rennt* as a manifesto articulating a programme for the future of German film,<sup>62</sup> while Christine Haase argues that the film effects a kind of do-over of German cinema: Lola's first two runs end bleakly with the deaths of the main protagonists Lola (Franka

59 Span, 'Tom Tykwer, Bringing a Bold New Concept to German Films: Fun.'

60 In its ability to awaken interest in German cinema internationally through inventive aesthetics, Tykwer's film has been compared to German classics like *Das Kabinett des Dr. Caligari* (*The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari*, dir. Robert Wiene, 1919) and *Nosferatu* (dir. F.W. Murnau, 1923). See Evans, 'Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt*', and Langford, 'Lola and the Vampire', respectively. Its depiction of post-unification Berlin revitalized interest in the genre of the Berlin film and evoked comparisons to *Berlin – Sinfonie einer Großstadt* (*Berlin – Symphony of a City*, dir. Walter Ruttmann, 1928) and *Der Himmel über Berlin* (*Wings of Desire*, dir. Wim Wenders, 1986).

61 Evans, 'Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt*', 114.

62 'He wants it to be more about moving pictures, action, the visual, and the possibility of identification with the characters, and less about stills, long takes, logos, and alienation from the characters, more about action that gives way to contemplation rather than simply about contemplation. Nonetheless, he does not advocate absolute suture or identification and forces the viewer to become an active participant in the reading/writing of the film', albeit by compelling reflection through repetition rather than, for example, through Brechtian defamiliarization techniques. Cormican, 'Goodbye Wenders', 131.

Potente) and Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu) respectively, while the redemptive third run offers a positive, Hollywood-style ending.<sup>63</sup>

Haase analyses *Lola rennt* as a 'go-between' combining elements of German and Hollywood cinema, 'a film that investigates the spaces and exchanges between the two paradigms.'<sup>64</sup> Building on her analysis—which also highlights the role of transnational capital in the film—I argue that, like *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt* also functions more broadly as a site of exchange between the cinema of neoliberalism and its film historical precursors, especially but not exclusively those of German cinema. The focal point of this exchange, the eponymous character Lola, also becomes—like the female characters in many of the other films discussed throughout this book—a key site for imaging the present in Tykwer's film. A crystal-image unto herself, Lola combines and displays the paradoxical qualities that characterize both gender roles and forms of aesthetic representation in neoliberalism.

Whereas the producer-driven strategies of *Das Boot* quite deliberately co-opted aspects of European art film for the global market, X-Filme's production code marketizes auteur cinema for the neoliberal age, creating a differently hybrid (but no less successful) form of global blockbuster.<sup>65</sup> Like *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt* was a domestic hit, selling millions of tickets in Germany, but (as with *Das Boot*) its real success came abroad. Despite being produced on a shoestring budget of only DM 3.5 million, *Lola rennt* remains the third highest grossing German film of all time in the U.S., and it was highly profitable in other foreign markets as well. Here, the key innovation was to feature images of Lola running: according to one calculation, more than half of the film's (very short) 79-minute screen time consists only of one-shots of Lola in motion, 'without any other relevant information being conveyed'.<sup>66</sup> Making a virtue of the limitations of the film's production context, the filmmakers relied on cheap but striking footage that is repeatedly repurposed and, through the skilled editing of

63 See Haase, 'You Can Run, but You Can't Hide.'

64 See Haase, 'You Can Run, but You Can't Hide', 414, n. 21.

65 Like *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt* also captured the attention of Hollywood: based largely on the success of Tykwer's film, Miramax signed a first-look deal with X-Filme Creative Pool granting the distributor the option of exclusive first rights to all of the production collective's properties in return for offers of directing projects to X-Filme's members (a deal that launched Tykwer's international career, beginning with *Heaven* (2002)). See Jäckel, *European Film Industries*, 31–35.

66 Haase, 'You Can Run, but You Can't Hide', 207.

Mathilde Bonnefoy, mixed with other visually arresting imagery, set to the thrumming beat of the soundtrack.<sup>67</sup>

Characteristic of the cinema of neoliberalism, the hybridity of *Lola rennt*—what Michael Wedel refers to as its ‘paradoxical aesthetic disposition’<sup>68</sup>—extends from the film’s flouting of conventional oppositions (high/low, art/popular, Europe/Hollywood) through its ambiguous gender politics and incongruous depiction of Berlin’s geography to its self-conscious merging of the movement-image, Lola’s iconic run, with a narrative frame and editing techniques representative of the time-image. In this regard, *Lola rennt* appears to encapsulate and revivify cinema itself, exploring key aspects of film’s medium specificity as it has unfolded across history, including movement, technology, vitalism, the fantastic, specularization, indexicality, and the epistemological status of the image, at the moment of its impending digitalization. As Tykwer has observed, for him it was ‘absolutely clear [...] that a film about the possibilities inherent in life had to be a film about the possibilities inherent in film as well. That’s why the film contains colour and black and white, slow motion and time lapse, in other words, all the basic components that have been used throughout film history’.<sup>69</sup> Notably, these various strands of *Lola rennt*—its narrative drawing on ideas from chaos theory (e.g. the butterfly effect) and philosophical debates about agency and determinism to examine human destinies, as well as its formal investigation of film’s aesthetic possibilities—all converge around money. As Deleuze writes, ‘Money is the obverse of all the images that the cinema shows and sets in place, so that films about money are already, if implicitly, films within the film or about the film.’<sup>70</sup> In Deleuze’s framework, the confrontation of the film with money, as its own internal structuring principle, correlates to the shift from movement-image to time-image and with this shift to a ‘new status of narration’, falsifying narration, which ‘as a labyrinth of time, is also the line which forks and keeps on forking, passing through *impossible presents*, returning to *not necessarily true pasts*’.<sup>71</sup> Broadly descriptive of the play with narrative time that characterizes *Lola rennt*, labyrinthine time and falsifying narration underpin Lola’s three runs—which fork out into different presents and spiral back onto not necessarily true pasts—as

67 Significant for X-Filme’s reboot of auteur cinema is the fact that, in addition to writing and directing *Lola rennt*, Tykwer also composed the film’s score, together with Johnny Klimek and Reinhold Heil.

68 Wedel, ‘Backbeat and Overlap’, 141.

69 Qtd. in Wedel, ‘Backbeat and Overlap’, 140.

70 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 77.

71 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 131.

well as the flash-forward sequences of still photographs that open onto apparently contingent futures.

The narrative of *Lola rennt* is set in motion with Manni's phone call to Lola, in which he explains that he has lost DM 100,000, the pay-off for a smuggling operation across the German-Polish border. Manni must recover the money by noon (that is, in twenty minutes), when he is set to meet with his boss Ronnie, who will kill him if he fails to hand over the cash. Having accidentally left the money in a subway car—he reflexively jumped off the train when transit cops boarded to check passengers' tickets—Manni blames Lola for the loss of the cash, since she failed to meet him at the agreed-upon pick-up point, having herself fallen victim to a series of botched exchanges resulting from the theft of her moped and the subsequent bungling of post-unification Berlin geography by a taxi driver who took her to the Grunewaldstrasse in the eastern rather than the western part of the city. Manni asks for Lola's help but also doubts her ability to find a solution to his impossible dilemma ('See! I knew that you wouldn't know what to do. I kept telling you that one day something would happen and even you wouldn't find a way out of it!'). This challenge prompts Lola to utter an ear-splitting scream that, in the course of the film, will become recognizable as one of her 'superpowers', and to instruct Manni: 'Now listen up. You wait there! I'm coming, I'm going to help you. Don't move from that spot. I'll be there in twenty minutes...I'll come up with something, I swear...You stay right there...I'll help you. I'll get the money.' While transposed onto the action movie genre—which the hybrid *Lola rennt* both relies on and interrogates—Lola's statement, and her ensuing runs, demonstrate an entrepreneurial spirit, a belief in her own ability to take responsibility and succeed at the impossible, that is consistent with neoliberal conceptions of the self.

Featuring a decentred male protagonist who exhibits failure and lack across multiple registers and an optimized female action hero who embodies 'the primal image of cinema' while defying conventional forms of specularization, *Lola rennt* destabilizes traditional gender roles.<sup>72</sup> Like *Das Boot*, the film also employs gender mobility—especially a particular form of active, defiant, and transgressive femininity associated with Lola's numerous namesakes from the history of German cinema<sup>73</sup>—as a key component of its popular appeal to the broadest possible global audience.

72 Tykwer refers to the image of Lola running as an 'Urbild von Kino' in 'Generalschlüssel fürs Kino', 31.

73 Lola is only the latest iteration in a long line of cinematic Lolas from Marlene Dietrich's Lola Lola in *Der blaue Engel* (*The Blue Angel*, dir. Josef von Sternberg, 1929) to Barbara Sukowa's

However, in the third act, the film rather patently forecloses on this gender mobility. As Haase notes, Lola's final run is divested of both causal agency and narrative meaning, since Manni ultimately recovers the money independently of Lola's efforts, in the film's 'happy ending', which restores heteropatriarchal gender roles and depicts the couple walking off hand-in-hand. This bait-and-switch caused feminist critics of *Lola rennt* to puzzle over its paradoxical gender politics: 'But what are the fantasies that the film produces and do they allow for new images of gender? Do gender coordinates get recoded?'<sup>74</sup> Ingeborg Majer-O'Sickey considers the possibility that the happy ending is ironic, 'a *quotation* of traditional endings in Hollywood romances' (though she does not seem fully persuaded that this is the case).<sup>75</sup> Indeed, just as it flouts passé dichotomies of irony vs. earnestness, or subversion vs. incorporation, this hybrid film also sutures together contradictory gender role expectations and requirements, making visible the coexistence of traditional and emergent forms of gender and sexuality in the period of neoliberal intensification at the turn of the millennium.

An allegory of neoliberalism, *Lola rennt* enacts neoliberal mandates (including the profit motive as the key motive of both cinema and human activity) while also placing them on display, particularly through the characterization of Lola as an exemplary neoliberal subject. Much like a video game character, Lola appears to carry skills learned in one run—such as the ability to quickly release the safety on a gun—over to the next run, exhibiting an overt form of self-optimization across the narrative of the film. In this way, Lola not only represents the self-improving and entrepreneurial individual, but she also quite literally embodies the cruelly optimistic 'necessary fiction' that an ordinary person can become extraordinary. Lola by-passes normal routes to fame and especially to fortune, thereby demonstrating a key neoliberal 'fantasy of transformative success'<sup>76</sup> at a moment when the dream of class mobility was becoming stronger, even as the chances of actually gaining in socioeconomic status had diminished substantially in millennial Germany. In Lola's case, the new technologies of the self required to achieve the impossible (DM 100,000 in twenty minutes) are figured as superpowers—the scream that silences men (Manni) and causes the ball to drop into the right place on the roulette wheel; the gaze that triggers the heart attack experienced by the security

Lola in Rainer Werner Fassbinder's eponymous 1981 film.

74 Barbara Kosta, 'Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* and the Usual Suspects', 172.

75 Majer-O'Sickey, 'Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets (Or Does She?)', 131.

76 Hall, 'The Neo-Liberal Revolution', 723.

guard Schuster (Armin Rohde); and the healing hand that normalizes his heartbeat again—which provide narrative resolution to the problem of human agency posed repeatedly by the film.

Throughout *Lola rennt*, Lola articulates a range of (sometimes contradictory) wishes and desires, echoed in the lyrics of the song 'Wish', which plays extra-diegetically during Lola's run and where the female voice (sung by actress Franka Potente) expresses the wish to be a hunter, an animal, a starship, a princess, a writer, a prayer, and a forest of trees, among others. As Michelle Langford puts it, 'With no clear distinction between human and non-human, material or ephemeral, Lola expresses her desire to be all and everything, regardless of the logical 'impossibility' of becoming any of them.'<sup>77</sup> On the one hand, Lola succeeds in this regard, ending up not only with Manni but also with (double) the money, thereby defying Schuster's directive to her in the second act, 'You can't have it all', and apparently emerging with all four of the components enumerated by Helen Gurley Brown in her postfeminist classic *Having It All: Love, Success, Sex, Money* (1982). On the other hand, Lola's wish, as articulated in the song and figured through her embrace of superpowers, to transcend the dilemmas of human sovereignty in the present by becoming Other, might also suggest an attempt at unbinding from the fraying fantasies of the good life in post-unification, neoliberalizing Berlin. The narrative strand of the film focusing on the melodramatic story of Jutta Hansen (Nina Petri)—Lola's father's lover and a board member at his bank, who asks him to start a family with her, while revealing in only one of the three runs that the baby she is pregnant with is not his biological child—similarly reflects on shifting and contradictory gender and sexual roles and expectations in the present. In the context of the film's gender politics, it is noteworthy that Lola achieves the impossible task that Manni asks of her, only to have her accomplishments undermined and discounted. As Barbara Kosta puts it, at the film's end 'Manni has regained his mobility, restored his masculinity, and taken control of his circumstance.'<sup>78</sup> Manni—a homophone for money and a metonym for man—prevails, representing a new form of mobile assets notably detached from established forms of institutional capital, the latter embodied here by Lola's banker father (Herbert Knaup).

Just as *Lola rennt* functions, on a formal-aesthetic level, as a hinge between the historical legacy of German film and its market-oriented contemporary incarnation, the film's narrative figures the decline of the bricks-and-mortar

77 Langford, 'Lola and the Vampire', 198.

78 Kosta, 'Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* and the Usual Suspects', 174.

bank, together with the gold standard and convertible currency, and the deregulation of national financial markets, making way for the emergence of the transnational financial services sector (and in this regard it is no accident that the film debuted just before the introduction of the Euro in Germany). Her father's bank is portrayed here as a quaint institution that Lola, in the second run, symbolically smashes, literally shattering an embossed image of legal tender that adorns its walls, before she proceeds to rob the bank and abscond with its cash. While in the first and second runs, Manni and Lola obtain the money through criminal activity, by robbing the supermarket and the bank respectively, the third run has them procuring the funds legitimately, in Lola's case through gambling at the casino (speculation). As Haase notes, Lola's punkish look contrasts sharply with the well-dressed milieu of the international bourgeoisie populating the casino, 'demonstrating that you don't have to be like them to participate in what they are doing. The flipside, though, is that this also demonstrates the undeniable hegemonic and conformist powers of capital and economy across cultures and countries'.<sup>79</sup> Haase's analysis of the casino, and of 'the presence and interlacing of different cultures in one location, and the pivotal part that economy and capital play in connecting them' throughout the narrative and *mise-en-scène* of *Lola rennt*, underscores both the film's narration of Berlin's transition to global capitalism and its depiction of the co-option of difference, as 'alternative' types like Lola and Manni are hailed by the neoliberal mainstream.

Emphasizing this double-edged quality of the film, David Martin-Jones's Deleuzian reading suggests that *Lola rennt* appeals to international markets at the point of Berlin's ascendance to the status of global city—a convergence point for business and finance at the interface of East and West—while also working on a local level as national cinema. Significant here is the film's financing by the Filmboard Berlin-Brandenburg, with its emphasis on boosting the regional economy and promoting Berlin both as a film-producing location and as a site for global investment more broadly, a production context which drives the film's form: 'Its seamless integration of different media aesthetically depicts several similar integrations that occur at the level of the narrative. The most obvious of these is the integration between East and West and the possibilities that offers for international trade.'<sup>80</sup> As with *Das Boot*, then, the promotion of both globalization and normalization underpins the international appeal and

79 Haase, 'You Can Run, but You Can't Hide', 403.

80 Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 105.



market orientation of *Lola rennt*. Indeed, Martin-Jones argues that the film allegorizes the 'right and wrong' ways to live in the global city, a Berlin that in addition to its newfound status as the locus for international investment in the neoliberalizing East Bloc has also just become the national capital of reunified Germany. While the first two runs exhibit Lola and Manni on the wrong path, the third run displays the 'right' way to inhabit Berlin, the mandate to responsabilize: 'The global city, we are [...] shown, favours those who take charge of their own destiny', and the film's temporal dimension reinforces 'its message of the entrepreneur's ability to determine their future in Berlin'.<sup>81</sup> In this regard, Martin-Jones observes that, in the portrait of globalizing Berlin offered by *Lola rennt*, the problems of the middle class take centre stage, while the social conditions of the disenfranchised (e.g. poor people in the former East Berlin and migrant populations), together with the ordinary problems faced by everyday Berliners due to gentrification, are side-lined.

In contrast to the films discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, which archive the transformations in ordinary life during the era of neoliberal intensification with a special focus on documenting the gentrification of Berlin by resignifying the genre of the *Alltagsfilm*, *Lola rennt* envisions gentrified Berlin by stitching together East and West in phantasmatic, virtual ways, thereby making visible already in 1998 the virtuality that would emerge as a key characteristic of the neoliberal city.<sup>82</sup> For instance, Manni tells Lola that he is in the 'Innenstadt' (inner city) in front of the 'Spirale' (the Spiral Bar) and that he will meet Ronnie at the 'Wasserturm' (water tower) right around the corner in 20 minutes. This fictional geography belies the fact that Berlin does not have a clearly delineated 'inner city' or downtown area (and its still palpable history of partition means that in the late 1990s, at least, there are still several contenders for city centre). The actual shooting location of the Bolle Supermarket where Manni stands in this scene lies in the western district of Charlottenburg, while Berlin's best-known water tower is near Kollwitzplatz in the eastern district of Prenzlauer Berg. Similarly, in this virtual Berlin, we see Lola running down one street in the heart of the eastern district of Mitte and turning the corner to emerge at an intersection several kilometres away in the western district of Kreuzberg. *Lola rennt* virtually images and seemingly naturalizes *avant la lettre* the gentrified city of the 2010s, when the market-driven reshaping of the landscape means that the remnants of Berlin's divided past have now become largely indiscernible

81 Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 107-108.

82 See Ward, 'Berlin, the Virtual Global City.'

to the untrained eye. In this way, the film anticipates, even participates in, latent processes of global capitalism and neoliberalization.

If, as Martin-Jones argues, *Lola rennt* allegorizes the mandate to self-optimize and master the contingent futures offered by the global city, in his analysis it does so by reduplicating 'the binary distinction that only enable[s] an expression of female performativity under the guise (!) of a game, magical fantasy, or dream. Thus the reterritorialization of the woman that we expect [...] is used to justify the "right" version of the narrative of national identity' with which the film leaves us.<sup>83</sup> *Lola rennt* mobilizes unconventional viewing positions through the 'magical fantasy' of Lola's runs, just as it develops qualities of the time-image, including labyrinthine time and falsifying narration, as key to its hybrid aesthetic. As in *Das Boot*, these dimensions of the film are coherent with the largely affirmative ideology of *Lola rennt*, which promotes entrepreneurialism and risk-taking as essential to success in the neoliberal age. However, as Martin-Jones's reading suggests, Lola, like other female protagonists of the German cinema of neoliberalism, ultimately embodies a form of cruel optimism, understood here as the illusion of (female) sovereignty and agency that is unmasked by her reterritorialization in a 'game-over' ending that firmly situates her within the heterosexual matrix, assuming the role of consumer-citizen in the normalized national context of globalizing Berlin.

For Martin-Jones, the reterritorialization of woman is mirrored in the reterritorialization of the time-image by the movement-image via the conventional ending of *Lola rennt*, which establishes one 'right' conclusion that renders the other possibilities raised by the film as 'wrong'. However, the film's ending—emblematic of the disorganized filmic language that is a trademark of the German cinema of neoliberalism—scrambles genre conventions and cinematic styles in its mash-up of Hollywood and German tropes, thereby complicating any thorough reterritorialization of the time-image.

The final scene finds Lola standing in the intersection in front of the Bolle Supermarket looking around uncertainly for Manni. A car approaches down the street, and Manni jumps out, shakes hands with Ronnie, and walks toward Lola. A medium shot shows Lola turning toward him in profile, as Manni enters the screen and kisses her, casually remarking, 'What happened to you? Did you run? No worries, everything's okay. Come on!' Turning away from the camera, they exit the intersection (see Illustration 5); as they walk away, a close-up shows their entwined hands, emphasizing their confirmed

83 Martin-Jones, *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, 113.



5. Restoring the heteropatriarchal order: Lola (Franka Potente) and Manni (Moritz Bleibtreu) hand-in-hand in the 'game-over' ending of Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt* (*Run Lola Run*, 1998).

coupledom. However, the camera then cuts to a medium close-up of Manni's face as he looks down at the bag Lola is carrying (which contains the 100,000 she has just won at the casino), and he casually asks her, 'What's in there?' As he looks up at Lola, who is not visible in this shot, Manni's face is captured in freeze frame, and the familiar sound of a camera shutter opening and snapping closed takes over the final seconds of the audiotrack. Freeze frame and shutter sound refer directly to the flash forward sequences that punctuate *Lola rennt*, when the film freezes on various minor characters, whose alternate paths through impossible futures are shown via a series of Polaroid-style snapshots that portray alternative fates for these characters, which appear to be contingent on the minute differences in each of Lola's three runs. Forming a relay back to these scenes, the freeze frame and shutter sound in the final shot of *Lola rennt* suggest an opening onto forking futures for Manni, deferring the linear force of the movement-image. This deferral is further suggested by the credit sequence that immediately follows upon the final freeze-frame shot, in which the credits roll from top to bottom, disorganizing filmic convention by reversing the direction of the typical credit sequence and implying once more the idea of a rewind or 'do over'.

The freeze frame on Manni signalling the end of *Lola rennt* occurs directly after Manni asks Lola about the contents of the bag, and before

she reveals the money it holds. In this final snapshot, Manni is literally recentred in the frame, while Lola's face and body—which have dominated the visual language of the entire film—are completely erased from view, recalling the thematization of women's narrative exclusion in Wenders's *Der Stand der Dinge*, discussed in Chapter 1, which also occurs in relation to photographs. Not only do we hear no reply to Manni's query about the bag, but the film withholds altogether any reaction shot of Lola. If, as *Lola rennt* has demonstrated throughout, time is money, in the exchange enacted by the final scene, Manni indexes time, while Lola—the emblem of German film, left holding the bag—forms a cipher for money. The 'internalized relation' that defines cinema from within, in Deleuze's formulation, the time-money exchange is externalized, even specularized, in *Lola rennt*, a film that makes visible not only the marketization of German cinema in the age of neoliberalism but also the specifically gendered form of cruel optimism faced by its protagonist and ideal viewer, the responsabilized postfeminist consumer citizen of global capitalism.<sup>84</sup>

### **Reterritorializing Defamiliarization: German Cinema as Global Cinema in *Das Leben der Anderen***

The disorganization of cinematic conventions regarding time and genre and the overt depiction of Lola's run for the money in *Lola rennt* foreground the financialization of German auteur cinema at the turn of the millennium. Premiering eight years later, the next global blockbuster to emerge from Germany, *Das Leben der Anderen*, similarly relies on a calculated disorganization of formal language associated with German film history—here, mixing references to Brecht and epic theatre with a melodramatic narrative designed to elicit cathartic emotions—in order to produce a universalizing mode of German cinema for the global marketplace. Central to this project is the film's development of the heritage form, a fundamentally transnational genre that cloaks itself in national garb. Indeed, while *Das Boot* and *Lola rennt* pioneered innovative strategies to transcend the limitations of their national production contexts (small budgets, the German language) to appeal to global audiences, *Das Leben der Anderen* reflects a much more overtly transnational production model, evident in the role Hollywood financing played in the film's creation. For this reason, *Das Leben der Anderen* poses an emblematic case study for thinking through the impact of an increasingly

84 Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 77.

globalized film industry on the creation of a popular cinema whose products retain a claim to national specificity.

Notable in this regard is how the film instrumentalizes familiar signifiers of political modernism in the German context for an affirmative vision of art that allegedly transcends ideology, history, and national specificity, appropriating oppositional aesthetic and political legacies in the service of its ostensibly neutral and immutable values. As Jennifer Creech observes, *Das Leben der Anderen* 'insistently asserts a clear division between the "good" and the "bad," placing us comfortably in the post-*Wende* globalized space of capitalism.'<sup>85</sup> While critics have emphasized how the film constructs a triumphalist narrative that reimagines Cold War history from a markedly Western perspective, less commonly acknowledged is the film's investment not only in normalizing the German past, but also in naturalizing the emergence of global neoliberalism through its form and content. Indeed, as Stuart Taberner has argued, these two projects operate in tandem, insofar as the agenda of normalization is 'a means of safeguarding German business interests, while fully integrating the FRG into the international economic, political and diplomatic order'.<sup>86</sup> In contrast to the strategy of 'deterritorializing the New German Cinema' described by John Davidson, in which the postwar Federal Republic pursued the complementary goals of fostering an internationally recognized cinema that would also offer a sanctioned space of aesthetic resistance and political opposition to dominant culture and policy, *Das Leben der Anderen* demonstrates how the German cinema of neoliberalism inverts this strategy by co-opting Germany's cultural legacies for a fundamentally market-driven form of filmmaking that eclipses the confines of the national.<sup>87</sup>

There is perhaps no other contemporary German film that has generated so much secondary literature, not least on the question of its historical and aesthetic verisimilitude, a testament to the emblematic status of *Das Leben der Anderen*.<sup>88</sup> Despite the fact that it has been amply discussed by scholars, I choose to return to the film here because there is no better example for demonstrating how changing production cultures in the age of neoliberalism underpin aesthetic and thematic choices. The transnational production

85 Creech, 'A Few Good Men', 117.

86 Taberner, *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*, 8.

87 See Davidson, *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema*.

88 See for example Cooke, *'The Lives of Others' and Contemporary German Film*; Creech, 'A Few Good Men'; Dueck, 'The Humanization of the Stasi in *Das Leben der Anderen*'; Herrmann, 'The Spy as Writer'; Schmidt, 'Between Authors and Agents'; Stein, 'Stasi with a Human Face?'; and Wilke, 'Fiktion oder erlebte Geschichte?'

context of *Das Leben der Anderen* is strongly implicated not only in the film's formal-aesthetic choices, but also in the vision of German history it proffers. The widespread success of the film thus helps to chart the aesthetic impact of transnational production strategies on German narratives, in particular the way these narratives affirm the large scale victory of global capital and Western artistic imperatives over independent and local traditions.

My discussion of this impact is not targeted at discrediting the representational practices of Hollywood-style popular cinema per se; as many critics have pointed out, in employing melodrama, conventional structures of identification, and high production values, the production trend of *Ostalgie* films in the late 1990s and early 2000s, including *Sonnenallee* (*Sun Alley*, 1999), *Helden wie wir* (*Heroes Like Us*, 1999), *Good Bye, Lenin!*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* made the history of the GDR interesting and accessible to new audiences and generated new debates about the German past. However, the global success of these and other neoliberal films has often come at the expense of expunging both alternative cinematic traditions and alternative views of history from their filmmaking archive. Moreover, as critics have emphasized, the *Ostalgie* films all notably coalesce around a male subject-narrator who is defined in opposition to a female-coded socialist state whose demise is typically figured through the death or side-lining of the female protagonist.<sup>89</sup> In this regard, it may be an overstatement to contend that *Ostalgie* films are 'privileged sites where the legacy of the [GDR] is actively contested, [offering] a potential critique of the socioeconomic-political situation in Germany today'.<sup>90</sup> Instead, the films pay lip service to the project of representing GDR history, while actually projecting, in often troubling ways, a triumphalist fantasy of reconciliation and a favourable rather than critical take on the post-unification socioeconomic-political situation. This conciliatory vision is typically figured through discourses of individualism, personal freedom, and self-sacrifice that take shape through a misogynist gender politics that seeks to resolve crises of history and sovereignty by expunging women from the narrative.

In this regard, the *Ostalgie* films constitute emphatic examples of the 'consensus cinema' identified by Rentschler as the characteristic mode of filmmaking in post-unification Germany. Rentschler argues that a key factor in the rise of consensus cinema was the increasing dominance of the German film market by the top five American distributors, who sprang in at the zero hour of unification to capitalize on the domestic profitability of German

89 See especially Schmidt, 'Between Authors and Agents', and Creech, 'A Few Good Men.'

90 Enns, 'The Politics of Ostalgie', 479-480.

cinema in the 1990s, fostering the rise to prominence of a new generation of younger German directors whose filmmaking influences and ambitions lay solidly with Hollywood.<sup>91</sup> The development and production history of *Das Leben der Anderen* strongly reflect this account, not least through the role of Disney's international distribution company Buena Vista International in helping to finance the film. What is more, as Halle points out, *Das Leben der Anderen* and the productions of X-Filme Creative Pool exemplify a 'new matrix of production' that distinguishes itself from a critical, locally-oriented direction in German film history through 'a universalizing perspective and a light-hearted quality or at least a positive redemptive ending'.<sup>92</sup> Halle argues that this new matrix was largely responsible for the silencing of a successful and important generation of GDR filmmakers, whose projects overwhelmingly failed to receive funding in the post-unification period: 'It is this matrix that East German directors identified as the censorship of the market.'<sup>93</sup> While East German directors therefore found few opportunities to interrogate East German history in post-unification cinema, Western directors predominated in the *Ostalgie* wave, and it is their visions of the GDR past that have in large part shaped its cinematic depiction.

Writer and director Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck is no exception. The son of German aristocrats displaced from the East at the end of the second World War, he was born in Cologne, grew up in various Western countries including Belgium and the United States, and studied in Oxford and Leningrad. Himself the product of a thoroughly internationalized background, Donnersmarck approached the creation of *Das Leben der Anderen* with a transnational mindset. Highly critical of German cinema, he counts among his filmic idols Robert Zemeckis, and his favourite movies include *Back to the Future* (1985) and *Groundhog Day* (1993), both films that notably engage with concepts of falsifying narration through the language of popular cinema.

Drawing in *Das Leben der Anderen* on familiar stylistic conventions associated with Hollywood, such as establishing shots, continuity editing, and lush musical scoring, Donnersmarck at the same time catered to international expectations of German cinema with his invocation of what historian Timothy Garton Ash has called 'Germany's festering half-rhyme', Stasi/Nazi.<sup>94</sup> Thus Donnersmarck, in portraying the GDR, cast actors familiar

91 See Rentschler, 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus.'

92 Halle, 'The Lives of Others, the New Matrix of Production and the Profitable Past', 64.

93 Halle, 'The Lives of Others, the New Matrix of Production and the Profitable Past', 62.

94 Ash, 'The Stasi on Our Minds.'

from their roles as Nazis, clothed them in uniforms and leather jackboots, and invoked an atmosphere of terror reminiscent of films about the Third Reich and the Holocaust, not least Steven Spielberg's *Schindler's List* (1993), which provides a narrative template for Donnersmarck's story of an insider turned critic of the regime and heroic saviour.

The producers of *Das Leben der Anderen*, Wiedemann & Berg, helped Donnersmarck recruit the film's cast of notable actors, its talented cameraman Hagen Bodanski, and, perhaps most importantly, its composer, Gabriel Yared, famous for his scores for well-known heritage films such as Anthony Minghella's *The English Patient* (1996), whose music is crucial to the achievement of Donnersmarck's film. For Wiedemann & Berg, *Das Leben der Anderen* presented a prestige project, an investment that they saw as a financial risk, but one that could (and did) amply pay them back in artistic credibility. In this regard, too, Wiedemann & Berg have followed the patented strategy of the heritage film, capitalizing on the ongoing voyeuristic fascination with German history in creating prestige productions made in Germany with transnational appeal.

Foregrounding the heritage film's project of aestheticizing history, Donnersmarck has said of his film, '[W]e've created a GDR that is truer than the real thing, that is realer than the actual GDR, and I hope more beautiful.'<sup>95</sup> This beautiful vision of the GDR focuses on the lives of two of the country's most beautiful people, the fictional playwright Georg Dreyman (Sebastian Koch) and his girlfriend, the actress Christa-Maria Sieland (Martina Gedeck). Having fallen in love with the actress after seeing her perform on stage, the nefarious Bruno Hempf (Thomas Thieme), Culture Minister of the GDR, orders Stasi surveillance of the couple's apartment, hoping to find a reason to imprison the apparently squeaky-clean Dreyman. Rather than finding dirt on Dreyman, however, the Stasi man appointed to surveil him, the drab Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler (Ulrich Mühe) undergoes a metamorphosis. Voyeuristically observing Dreyman and Sieland's bohemian lifestyle of lively parties, artistic creation, and passionate sex, Wiesler slowly begins first to identify with his subjects and then to undermine the aims of the regime to which he has sworn loyalty.

In this regard, the specific form of 'falsifying narration' that the film appropriates is significant. Like *Das Boot* and *Lola rennt*, and like many other *Ostalgie* films, *Das Leben der Anderen* relies on the device of the not-necessarily-true past to develop its creative vision of German history, one that yokes the demand for empathy and positive affects characteristic of

95 Qtd. by Enns, 'The Politics of Ostalgie', 490.



neoliberalism to its dismantling of agency and sovereignty. In its depiction of his aesthetic education, the film emphasizes Wiesler's interpellation into a regime dominated by emotion and affective attachments, generated through the resonance of great art, which cause him to turn away from the bad deeds that characterized his life path as a Stasi agent to become a 'good man'. *Das Leben der Anderen* is at pains to demonstrate how the emotional catharsis facilitated by literature and music leads Wiesler to switch sides and come to the aid of those he had been assigned to surveille, a fundamentally false narrative that, as critics protested, has no historical precedent. However, what is 'true' about this creative vision is how it naturalizes and affirms the emergent emotional regime of neoliberalism, in which the performance of empathy becomes a surrogate for the human capacity to act.

The film's imaging of the process of identification that emerges from Wiesler's intense audiovisual spectatorship also affirms on a narrative and diegetic level the ethical imperative of precisely the kind of conventional cinematic language employed by *Das Leben der Anderen* for fostering empathy and moral behaviour, thereby conjoining the film's political critique of the Stasi with its aesthetic rejection of German cinematic and theatrical traditions, especially forms of distancing and defamiliarization. This is certainly one reason why so much criticism of the film revolved around the question of its historical authenticity, and in particular the insistence of various critics that no Stasi agent was ever known to have switched allegiance or come to the aid of his targets. The discussion of historical authenticity in this sense functioned as a cipher for the way the film disorganizes cinematic form by discrediting the cultural heritage of aesthetic modernism and socialism while simultaneously co-opting that heritage for its affirmative and normalizing depiction of the German past. As Gary Schmidt puts it, 'The film renegotiates the fraught relationship between art and ideology in 20<sup>th</sup>-Century German history' in order to reproduce 'an aesthetic space deemed to be separate from and superior to the political'.<sup>96</sup> Notably, its promotion of this illusion of political neutrality dovetails with the film's market orientation, and it is precisely in this conjunction that *Das Leben der Anderen* functions as an avatar of cinematic neoliberalism.

Indeed, the first sign of Wiesler's change of allegiance comes when he swipes a volume of Brecht's poems from Dreyman's desk; we see him voraciously reading the distinctive canary-yellow book on the couch in his drab apartment while we hear, in voiceover, Dreyman pronouncing the lines of Brecht's well-known love poem 'Remembering Marie A'. As Marc

96 Schmidt, 'Between Authors and Agents', 231.

Silberman has written, 'the filmmaker appropriates Brecht in this context for a symptomatically un-Brechtian purpose. Whereas [...] Brecht's views on art generally insist on the need to change society so that the goodness of individuals [...] will not be perverted, von Donnersmarck inserts Brecht into his own aesthetic "system" that assumes great art must remain apolitical in order to humanize a bad person like Wiesler, who can then change the world'.<sup>97</sup> In *Das Leben der Anderen*, the aesthetic legacy of Brecht operates as a meme for 'the transformative value of art', here drained of its broader collective social vision and deployed in the service of individual development. As Silberman concludes, 'The film viewer is asked to recognize the domain of art as a means of self-transformation and redemption, no matter what the social and political contingencies; capitalism and communism from this perspective are both equally oppressive and, as far as art is concerned, the individual, not society, needs to be changed'.<sup>98</sup> Not only is this vision entirely coherent with the neoliberal emphasis on the transformation of the self, but it quite explicitly emphasizes the promotion of individualism that is a hallmark of neoliberal ideologies, and it does so precisely within the context of the dismantling of the 'mass utopias' of both welfare capitalism and state socialism along with forms of state provision and collectivity supported by both. By narrating the collapse of the GDR and the fall of the Wall as a story about individual redemption through art—a story that notably portrays the redemption of the Stasi man and the socialist author, both of whose redemption is contingent on the death of the female protagonist—*Das Leben der Anderen* transforms this historical rupture into a common-sense tale of personal liberty, at the same time ensuring, in Schmidt's words, 'the legitimacy of art, and of this particular work of art as a vehicle for the expression of ostensibly universal truths or values'.<sup>99</sup>

The story of Donnersmarck's inspiration for the script of *Das Leben der Anderen*, which he wrote as an assignment during his studies at film school in Munich, has been widely reported. In interviews, Donnersmarck recounts lying on the floor of his apartment, listening to classical music, and recalling a statement made by Lenin that his love for Beethoven's *Appassionata Sonata* got in the way of his urge for revolution. 'It shows so clearly how any ideologue has to shut out his feelings altogether in order to pursue his

97 Silberman, 'The Lives of Others', 153.

98 Silberman, 'The Lives of Others', 152.

99 Schmidt, 'Between Authors and Agents', 232. Schmidt quotes an interview with Donnersmarck in which the director stated, 'I really don't believe there is such a thing as politics. It's all about individuals. [...] You can't really analyse politics on a systems level', a quote that demonstrates the neoliberal underpinnings of his work (246, n.6).

goals', Donnersmarck proclaimed, 'So, I thought: What if Lenin could have somehow been forced to listen to the Appassionata, just as he was getting ready to smash in somebody's head? [...] I "saw" a picture (actually even something like a medium close-up) of a man in a depressing room, with earphones on his head, expecting to hear words that go against his beloved ideology, but actually hearing a music so beautiful and so powerful that it makes him re-think (or rather: refeel) that ideology.'<sup>100</sup> This image, of course, forms the central scene of *Das Leben der Anderen*, the pivotal moment in the film's discourse on the transformative value of art and one that also makes reference to Brecht.

Dreyman has just learned that his friend Jerska, a blacklisted theatre director who had staged breakthrough performances of Dreyman's plays, has committed suicide, hopeless about his prospects for ever working again in the GDR. Mourning Jerska, Dreyman picks up the piano score for *Die Sonate vom Guten Menschen* (The Sonata of the Good Man), a recent birthday gift from his dead friend. As Wiesler listens through surveillance headphones, we hear the opening strains of the sonata, whose title resonates with Brecht's famous play *Der gute Mensch von Sezuan* (*The Good Woman of Sezuan*). Underscoring the slippage between the film's story of transformation through art and its own deployment of art as transformation, the first bars of the sonata play extradiegetically as we watch Dreyman and Sieland grieve; it is only in a subsequent shot that we see Dreyman playing the sonata on his baby grand piano. A cut to the surveillance centre in the attic of Dreyman's apartment building shows Wiesler from behind; as he (and we) listen to the sonata, the camera makes a slow, 180-degree pan around the Stasi man, finally revealing his face, which is glistening with tears: his cool and detached persona dissolves as Wiesler experiences the cathartic potential of the music and breaks down at its beauty. Driving the message home, Dreyman repeats to Sieland the anecdote about Lenin and Beethoven, posing to her the rhetorical question: 'Can a person who has heard this music—I mean, really *heard* this music—still be a bad person?'

Here, the film suggests that Wiesler's emergent critique of the state, and his willingness to work against the Stasi in order to save Dreyman and Sieland, come about because of his appreciation of the beautiful vision of art they have exposed him to; this scene also specularizes Wiesler's emotional catharsis as an index of his transformation into an empathic subject, a 'good man'. Of course, this beautiful vision also contributes to the overall audiovisual attractions of Donnersmarck's film, treating audiences

100 Sony Pictures Classics, 'Press Booklet for "The Lives of Others,"' 8.

to the ostensibly German strains of the harmonious piano sonata and the sweeping camera movements that culminate in the great reveal of Wiesler's redemption. In this way, the aesthetic and political trajectories of *Das Leben der Anderen* converge: the film valorizes the transcendence and catharsis produced by its own transnational style of filmmaking to elicit consensus with an affirmative vision of German history, and in the same gesture it dismisses the longstanding German tradition of dialectical art (including Brechtian *Verfremdung*, a central facet of German cinema from the Weimar period onward) as a disposable byproduct of the GDR. In fact, contrary to some critics' expression of surprise at Donnersmarck's enlisting of Brecht for an aesthetic project so diametrically opposed to political modernism, the deployment of Brecht is actually central to the neoliberal project of co-opting resistance and difference engaged by *Das Leben der Anderen*. Rentschler remarks that Donnersmarck's movie is quite literally a heritage film in that 'it inscribes heritage in its narrative and, as a cultural artefact, enacts the construction of a humanistic heritage'; appropriating Brecht is integral to this double gesture.<sup>101</sup>

Also crucial for the film's inscription of heritage for a universalizing cinematic language is how, like *Das Boot*, it repackages clichés for pleasurable consumption, portraying the key representatives of the GDR state, Culture Minister Bruno Hempf and First Lieutenant Anton Grubitz (Ulrich Tukur) as cynical bureaucrats in grey, ill-fitting suits, eager to exploit anything or anyone for their own power and pleasure. Their essential evil is counterposed with the spectre of the 'good man' repeatedly referenced in the film's dialogue, beginning with Hempf's winking comment to Dreyman that the state likes his plays because they demonstrate a belief in the essential goodness of people and their ability to change; as Hempf suggests, this belief is naïve, for no matter how often he writes it in his plays, 'Menschen verändern sich nicht' (people never change).

The film's affirmation of the possibility of human transformation and redemption—and its concomitant normalization of history—is achieved not only through its co-optation of modernist aesthetics and politics, but also, crucially, through its employment of gender clichés, especially its conventional association of the female protagonist with the undesirable elements of the GDR. As Creech writes: '*The Lives of Others* incorporates both Brecht and Lenin into a nostalgic reconstruction of a western Cold War narrative of the GDR (Brecht the "romantic," Lenin the "weepy bourgeois subject") and uses the female character as a space through which the male

101 Rentschler, '*The Lives of Others*', 252.

protagonists move to achieve their heroic agency.<sup>102</sup> Like *Das Boot*, *Das Leben der Anderen* is a film about men; aside from the female protagonist, the actress Christa-Maria Sieland, the film's only female characters are the prostitute who visits Wiesler in his apartment and Dreyman's neighbour, Frau Meinecke, whom Wiesler threatens after she witnesses the installation of surveillance equipment in the apartment. As for Sieland, the film requires her death for its narrative resolution, which not only figures the demise of the GDR, but also unites the two male protagonists in a transcendent—and wholly masculine—aesthetic space, restoring Dreyman's agency as an artist and providing for Wiesler's redemption as a good man.

Sieland, a beautiful but volatile woman addicted to prescription pain pills, stands at the nexus of the film's love rectangle: the girlfriend of Dreyman, she attracts the attentions of both the GDR Culture Minister Hempf and the Stasi man Wiesler. When Wiesler fails to turn up any incriminating evidence about Dreyman, Hempf resorts to other measures to satisfy his desire for Christa-Maria, blackmailing her to sleep with him in exchange for continued access to the pills. Caught between the two men, Sieland finally breaks, betraying to the Stasi Dreyman's identity as the author of an incriminating story about the GDR published in the West, an act that justifies her impending death in the film's narrative economy. Unaware that Wiesler is on her side and has covered up the evidence of her betrayal, Sieland is riddled with guilt and jumps in front of a truck. The melodrama of her highly operatic death scene is heightened by the film's artful use of the colour red to puncture its otherwise muted visual tones: The red blood that flows from Christa-Maria is visually linked to the red typewriter ink that Dreyman used to write his illegal essay, which taints the hands of Wiesler—red of course being the colour of communism as well. When, in the film's epilogue, Dreyman reads his Stasi file in the Normannenstrasse archive after the fall of the Wall, he finds Wiesler's red fingerprints on the report of Sieland's death. These prints, which derive from the ink of the contraband typewriter Wiesler has rescued from Dreyman's apartment, and which recall Christa-Maria Sieland's blood, constitute for Dreyman incontrovertible evidence of the essential goodness of the unknown Stasi agent, whose deeds Dreyman only now discovers.

If Sieland's death allegorically kills off the GDR, putting an end to the psychodrama between Hempf, Dreyman, and Wiesler, and signalling the end of socialism both aesthetically and in the storyline, then her suicide also enables the final triumph of melodrama over dialectical cinema and

102 Creech, 'A Few Good Men', 111.

of catharsis over defamiliarization techniques in the larger aesthetic drama staged by the film. In *Das Leben der Anderen*, we first see Sieland on stage, where she is the object not only of our gaze as spectators of the film, but also of the gazes of all three male characters who share an infatuation with her. Playing in one of Dreyman's dramas, a kitschy GDR theatre production that conforms to the worst stereotype of proletarian theatre, Sieland's prodigious acting talents appear to be wasted. Disturbingly, it is only in her death scene (the film's most climactic and cathartic scene) that Sieland seems to finally get her due as an actress. Then, in the epilogue to *Das Leben der Anderen*, we see a Western restaging of Dreyman's play, a sublime counterpart to the ridiculous GDR version. Here, a new actress has taken on the stage role of Martha previously played by Sieland, while Dreyman sits in the audience holding hands with an elegant new Western girlfriend, who has replaced Sieland in the playwright's private life. Without comment, the film substitutes new, apparently Western counterparts for Sieland, thereby again equating the dead female lead with the extinct GDR. What is more, the actress now reprising Sieland's original role is played by Sheri Hagen, the well-known Black German director and performer. Although she is only briefly visible in this scene, the choice to cast Hagen—the only Black character in the film—in a visible stage role previously performed by the white protagonist conspicuously introduces racial diversity as a quality of post-unification German culture that had been lacking in the GDR. *Das Leben der Anderen* tokenizes Hagen (whom we only see this once) for its superficial vision of contemporary Germany as a multicultural society where diversity is celebrated, a vision that retroactively justifies once more the symbolic death of Christa-Maria/the GDR.

Watching this Western production of his own play, Dreyman is moved to tears, underscoring the film's message about the emotional and redemptive value of art. Just as Wiesler's transformation into a good person was effected by his cathartic experiences reading poetry and listening to 'The Sonata of the Good Man', Dreyman's catharsis now signals his postwall transformation as an artist. We learn that he hasn't written anything since the fall of the Wall, but now he visits the Stasi archive, learning the truth about his surveillance and the role played by Wiesler in manipulating the dramatic events of his life. As a result, Dreyman writes a new novel, cleverly titled *The Sonata of the Good Man*, which he dedicates to HGW XX/7, Wiesler's Stasi code name. Departing from the dialectical form of the drama that characterized his work as a writer during GDR times, Dreyman's postwall novel presumably exemplifies the much-lauded 'return to narrative' (and concomitant turn away from politics) that followed the discrediting of



6. The marketization of culture in Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben der Anderen* (*The Lives of Others*, 2006): Wiesler (Ulrich Mühle) discovers an advertisement for the redemptive novel written by Dreyman (Sebastian Koch).

political writers from East and West, such as Christa Wolf and Günter Grass, in the aftermath of unification. At the end of *Das Leben der Anderen*, Wiesler, now a postman in postwall Berlin, notices a photo of Dreyman and a display of his new book as he walks by the Karl-Marx-Bookstore, a famous landmark in eastern Berlin (see Illustration 6). Entering the bookstore, he buys a copy of the novel. When the clerk asks him whether he wants it gift wrapped, Wiesler answers 'Nein, das ist für mich' (No, it's for me), a neat double entendre that indicates his recognition of Dreyman's intentions in writing the book. Notably, the film ends with a freeze frame on Wiesler holding the book he has just bought, an image that echoes the recentring of Manni via freeze frame in the final shot of *Lola rennt*.

This final scene functions as a clever summary of the film's larger gesture, emphasizing once more on a diegetic level the conquest of conventional, market-based, consumable forms of culture over art associated with political modernism. This triumph is figured precisely through a financial transaction that exemplifies the commodification and marketization of culture: the climactic act of *Das Leben der Anderen* is Wiesler's purchase of Dreyman's book. Both a pleasurable feat of consumption and an emblem of the Stasi man's redemption, this act functions as a metonymy for the neoliberal transition entailed by the fall of the Wall insofar as it depicts Wiesler's literal acquisition of a new, post-unification identity endowed upon him through his purchase of the book. Forming a relay back to the Brecht volume that Wiesler had stolen from Dreyman's desk and which initiated his transformation, Dreyman's book completes the circuit of reterritorializing defamiliarization by replacing Brecht in Wiesler's hands.

Writing in *Der Spiegel* in 2007, Günter Rohrbach, President of the German Film Academy and producer of *Das Boot* among many other successful

German films, offered a spirited defence of *Das Leben der Anderen* precisely as an exemplar of consensus cinema. Rohrbach inveighed against German film critics for lauding low-budget films like Valeska Grisebach's *Sehnsucht* (*Longing*, 2006, see Chapter 5), which attract limited domestic audiences, while panning big-budget box-office draws like Tom Tykwer's *Das Parfum*:

That a film was expensive shouldn't speak against it per se [...]. One also shouldn't take umbrage at a film simply because it aims for a big audience. That isn't the easiest but, as a rule, the hardest path. It shouldn't be forbidden for a film that achieves popular success to also win prizes. One doesn't need to invent insults like 'consensus film' or, as the film *Das Leben der Anderen* was labelled in a sign of heightened disdain, 'multi-compatible consensus film'. One cannot [...] simply pan *Das Parfum* without even hinting at the extraordinary achievement of its direction, camera, sets, and costumes, [which exhibit] a professional standard that is extremely rare in Europe let alone in Germany.<sup>103</sup>

For Rohrbach, 'multi-compatible consensus film' is in fact far from an insult—it is precisely a praiseworthy quality insofar as it signals the aim to please the largest possible audience, with all the international ambitions and professional standards that entails. As he concludes, 'People don't go to "good" movies, they go to movies that interest them, and they are grateful when these movies are also good.'<sup>104</sup> In Rohrbach's estimation, not only should German filmmakers make consensus films, but German film critics should support and indeed legitimize these films rather than insisting on a differentiated film landscape, let alone on critical reflection about the aesthetics and politics of cinema.

A kind of manifesto for the German cinema of neoliberalism, Rohrbach's essay demonstrates how the new 'matrix of production' he helped set into motion with the global blockbuster *Das Boot* prevails in the new millennium (the scepticism of some critics notwithstanding). Writing as a representative of the German film industry, Rohrbach naturalizes as common sense the connections among 'professional quality', political complicity, and marketability, writing off considerations of aesthetic form (let alone the possibility of minor or counter-hegemonic filmmaking) altogether. In this sense, his essay demonstrates the extent to which, from an institutional perspective at least, contemporary German cinema is driven by a commercial imperative

<sup>103</sup> Rohrbach, 'Das Schmollen der Autisten'.

<sup>104</sup> Rohrbach, 'Das Schmollen der Autisten'.



above all else. As the global blockbusters *Das Boot*, *Lola rennt*, and *Das Leben der Anderen* reflect, German filmmakers have continued to succeed in parlaying this commercial imperative into universally appealing films.

If the metacinematic films *Der Stand der Dinge* and *Alle Meine Mädchen* analysed in Chapter 1 employ films within films to address the crystal-image of time/money as a means of confronting the impending financialization of German cinema, the three emblematic films discussed in this chapter illustrate a trajectory of appropriation and eventual subsumption of local German film traditions that ultimately forecloses on the critical potential heralded by the crystal-image itself. Deleuze's multivalent figure suggests the contradictory heterogeneity, variety, and political force of a form of cinema defused and subsumed by the global blockbuster. Indeed, Deleuze's emphasis on the time/money relation, which had emerged as a central preoccupation of art cinema during the writing of *Cinema* in the early 1980s (a preoccupation for which *Der Stand der Dinge* serves as the emblematic example in his analysis), anticipates the way this relation is neutralized via neoliberalism's economization of everything. In this sense Deleuze virtually predicts the eventual obsolescence of his own account of cinema in and for the age of neoliberalism.

## Works Cited

- Ash, Timothy Garton. 'The Stasi on Our Minds.' *The New York Review of Books* (31 May 2007). <https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2007/05/31/the-stasi-on-our-minds/>. Accessed 3 November 2008.
- Baer, Hester. *Dismantling the Dream Factory: Gender, German Cinema, and the Postwar Quest for a New Film Language*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2009.
- Baer, Hester. 'Producing Adaptations: Bernd Eichinger.' In *Generic Histories of German Cinema: Genre and Its Deviations*. Ed. Jaimey Fisher. Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2013. 173–96.
- Berlant, Lauren. *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011.
- Brauerhoch, Annette. 'Sexy Soldier: Kriegsfilme und weibliches Publikum.' *Frauen und Film* 61 (2000): 85–100.
- Clarke, James. *War Films*. London: Virgin, 2006.
- Colebrook, Claire. *Understanding Deleuze*. Crows Nest, New South Wales: Allen & Unwin, 2002.
- Cooke, Paul. *'The Lives of Others' and Contemporary German Film: A Companion*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013.
- Cormican, Muriel. 'Goodbye Wenders: "Lola Rennt" as German Film Manifesto.' *German Studies Review* 30.1 (2007): 121–140.

- Creech, Jennifer. 'A Few Good Men: Gender, Ideology, and Narrative Politics in *The Lives of Others* and *Good Bye, Lenin!*' *Women in German Yearbook: Feminist Studies in German Literature & Culture* 25 (2009): 100–126.
- Davidson, John E. *Deterritorializing the New German Cinema*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 1: The Movement Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986.
- Deleuze, Gilles. *Cinema 2: The Time-Image*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1989.
- Dueck, Cheryl. 'The Humanization of the Stasi in *Das Leben der Anderen*.' *German Studies Review* 31. 3 (2008): 599–609.
- Duggan, Lisa. *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2003.
- Enns, Anthony. 'The Politics of Ostalgie: Post-Socialist Nostalgia in Recent German Film.' *Screen* 48. 4 (2007): 475–491.
- Evans, Owen. 'Tom Tykwer's *Lola rennt*: Postmodern, Posthuman or "Post-Theory"?' *Studies in European Cinema* 1. 2 (2004): 105–115.
- Fisher, Jaimey. 'Deleuze in a Ruinous Context: German Rubble-Film and Italian Neorealism.' *Iris* 23 (1997): 53–74.
- Fisher, Jaimey. 'On the Ruins of Masculinity: The Figure of the Child in Italian Neorealism and German Rubble-Film.' In *Italian Neorealism and Global Cinema*. Ed. Laura E. Ruberto and Kristi M. Wilson. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2007. 25–53.
- Haase, Christine. 'You Can Run, but You Can't Hide: Transcultural Filmmaking in *Run Lola Run* (1998).' In *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective*. Ed. Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. 395–415.
- Hall, Stuart. 'The Neo-Liberal Revolution.' *Cultural Studies* 25. 6 (2011): 705–728.
- Halle, Randall. *German Film after Germany: Toward a Transnational Aesthetic*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2008.
- Halle, Randall. 'German Film, European Film: Transnational Production, Distribution and Reception.' *Screen* 47.2 (2006): 251–259.
- Halle, Randall. 'The Lives of Others, the New Matrix of Production and the Profitable Past.' In *The Lives of Others' and Contemporary German Film: A Companion*. Ed. Paul Cooke. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 59–78.
- Herrmann, Mareike. 'The Spy as Writer: Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's *Das Leben Der Anderen*.' *Gegenwartsliteratur: A German Studies Yearbook* 7 (2008): 90–113.
- Jäckel, Anne. *European Film Industries*. London: British Film Institute, 2003.
- Jameson, Fredric. 'The End of Temporality.' *Critical Inquiry* 29. 4 (2003): 695–718.

- Koepnick, Lutz. "Amerika gibt's überhaupt nicht": Notes on the German Heritage Film.' In *German Pop Culture: How 'American' Is It?* Ed. Agnes C. Mueller. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. 191-208.
- Koepnick, Lutz. 'Reframing the Past: Heritage Cinema and Holocaust in the 1990s.' *New German Critique* 87 (2002): 47-82.
- Kosta, Barbara. 'Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run* and the Usual Suspects: The Avant-Garde, Popular Culture, and History.' In *German Pop Culture: How 'American' Is It?* Ed. Agnes C. Mueller. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2004. 165-179.
- Langford, Michelle. 'Lola and the Vampire: Technologies of Time and Movement in German Cinema.' In *Cinema and Technology: Cultures, Theories, Practices*. Ed. Bruce Bennett, Marc Furstenau, and Adrian Mackenzie. Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008. 187-200.
- Majer-O'Sickey, Ingeborg. 'Whatever Lola Wants, Lola Gets (Or Does She?): Time and Desire in Tom Tykwer's *Run Lola Run*.' *Quarterly Review of Film and Video* 19. 2 (2002): 123-131.
- Martin-Jones, David. *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity: Narrative Time in National Contexts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006.
- Prager, Brad. 'Beleaguered Under the Sea: Wolfgang Petersen's *Das Boot* (1981).' In *Light Motives: German Popular Film in Perspective*. Ed. Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003. 237-258.
- Rentschler, Eric. 'The Lives of Others: The History of Heritage and the Rhetoric of Consensus.' In *The Lives of Others' and Contemporary German Film: A Companion*. Ed. Paul Cooke. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 242-260.
- Rentschler, Eric. 'From New German Cinema to the Post-Wall Cinema of Consensus.' In *Cinema and Nation*. Ed. Mette Hjort and Scott MacKenzie. London; New York: Routledge, 2000.
- Rodowick, D. N. *Gilles Deleuze's Time Machine*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997.
- Rohrbach, Günter. 'Nachwort.' In Andreas M. Rauch, *Bernd Eichinger und seine Filme*. Frankfurt: Haag + Herchen, 2000. 214-219.
- Rohrbach, Günter. 'Das Schmollen der Autisten.' *Der Spiegel* (22 January 2007).
- Schmidt, Gary. 'Between Authors and Agents: Gender and Affirmative Culture in *Das Leben der Anderen*.' *The German Quarterly* 82. 2 (2009): 231-49.
- Silberman, Marc. 'The Lives of Others: Screenplay as Literature and the Literary Film.' In *The Lives of Others' and Contemporary German Film: A Companion*. Ed. Paul Cooke. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2013. 139-157.
- Sony Pictures Classics. 'Press Booklet for *The Lives of Others*.' <https://www.sony-classics.com/thelivesofothers/externalLoads/TheLivesofOthers.pdf>. Accessed 20 August 2018.

- Span, Paula. 'Tom Tykwer, Bringing a Bold New Concept to German Films: Fun.' *Washington Post* (27 June 1999). <https://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/style/movies/features/tomtykwer.htm?noredirect=on>. Accessed 10 July 2018.
- Stein, Mary Beth. 'Stasi with a Human Face? Ambiguity in "Das Leben der Anderen."' *German Studies Review* 31. 3 (2008): 567–79.
- Taberner, Stuart. *German Literature in the Age of Globalisation*. Birmingham, UK: University of Birmingham Press, 2004.
- Tykwer, Tom. 'Generalschlüssel fürs Kino.' In *Szenenwechsel: Momentaufnahmen des jungen deutschen Films*. Ed. Michael Töteberg. Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1999. 17–33.
- Uka, Walter. 'Der deutsche Film "schiebt den Blues": Kino und Film in der Bundesrepublik in den achtziger Jahren.' In *Die Kultur der achtziger Jahre*. Ed. Werner Faulstich. München: Wilhelm Fink, 2005. 105–21.
- Ward, Janet. 'Berlin, the Virtual Global City.' *Journal of Visual Culture* 3. 2 (2004): 239–56.
- Wedel, Michael. 'Backbeat and Overlap: Time, Place, and Character Subjectivity in *Run Lola Run*.' In *Puzzle Films: Complex Storytelling in Contemporary Cinema*. Ed. Warren Buckland. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009. 129–150.
- Wiedemann & Berg. Website. <http://www.w-b-film.de/company/>. Accessed 25 June 2018.
- Wilke, Manfred. 'Fiktion oder erlebte Geschichte? Zur Frage der Glaubwürdigkeit des Films *Das Leben der Anderen*.' *German Studies Review* 31. 3 (2008): 589–598.
- X-Filme Creative Pool. 'Eins, zwei, drei...X Filme.' In *Szenenwechsel: Momentaufnahmen des jungen deutschen Films*. Ed. Michael Töteberg. Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1999. 40–43.
- X-Filme Creative Pool. Website. <http://www.x-filme.de/en/profile>. Accessed 25 June 2018.